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The February Revolution, Petrograd, 1917

*The End of the Tsarist Regime
and the Birth of Dual Power*

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa

BRILL

The February Revolution, Petrograd, 1917

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and the Birth of Dual Power*

By

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa



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For Debbie and Kenneth



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Preface

The February Revolution: Petrograd, 1917 was first published in 1981. In this book, I comprehensively examined the broad scope of the February Revolution covering the workers' movement, the soldiers' uprising, the liberal opposition to the tsarist regime, the high politics of the Duma Committee and the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet that led to the end of the monarchy and the birth of dual power. This book has stood the test of time. Despite the momentous significance of the events, no monograph has appeared since the publication of my book that covers all aspects of the revolutionary process that began from 23 February to 3 March 1917.¹

I spent more than ten years studying the nine days of the February Revolution. After the publication of this book, I decided to broaden the horizon a bit beyond these nine days, and began working on other research projects, leaving my interests in the February Revolution on the backburner. But I never took my eyes off the pot. In recent years many autocratic regimes fell throughout the world. The comparisons between these upheavals and the February Revolution rekindled my interest in the latter. I have become convinced that a detailed study of the February Revolution as one of the classical revolutions can serve as a useful basis for the comparative study of revolutions.

Six years ago, Anthony Arnone of Haymarket Press and Sebastian Budgen of the Historical Materialism Book Series suggested that I publish the revised edition of the book, and made the arrangement to publish with Brill. I decided to take up the challenge. After all, my book is now out of print and out of stock, and the general public has no access to it. So I went back to my old haunt the February Revolution, trying to catch up with the accumulated scholarship of the last thirty years. I must confess that it has not been an easy task. It was like coming back to the old house I abandoned thirty years ago and deciding to remodel it. I preserved the basic structure of the book, but revised each chapter substantially by incorporating recent scholarship. While I changed some chapters slightly, I completely overhauled other chapters and I have added one new chapter.

As in my original book, I have divided the present text into six parts. Part 1 and Part 2 cover the relationship between the liberals and the tsarist regime, the

¹ For general introduction, see Hasegawa 1981, pp. xi–xviii. For general historiography of the February Revolution, see *ibid.*, pp. xi–xii. The only comprehensive treatment of the February Revolution before the publication of my book is Burdzhakov 1967.

workers' movement, and the revolutionary parties from the outbreak of World War I in July 1914 until the end of 1916 (Part 1) and on the eve (Part 2). Part 3 is devoted to the strike movement and the soldiers' uprising from 23 February to 27 February. The formation of the two revolutionary powers, the Petrograd Soviet and the Duma Committee, is examined in Part 4. Part 5 deals with the political process that led to the abdication of Nicholas II. Part 6 is devoted to the formation of the Provisional Government and the birth of dual power.

A few words about the historiography of the February Revolution.

Both Soviet-era historians and the dominant school of Western historians take the view that the February Revolution was fundamentally the revolt of the masses against the established order. They created the revolutionary power in the form of the Petrograd Soviet. The liberal bourgeoisie were opposed to the revolution, but the circumstances forced them to seize power only to contain the revolution. The paradox of the February Revolution was that the real power that was already established in the Petrograd Soviet was transferred to the Provisional Government. This happened because the moderate socialists who became the leaders of the Petrograd Soviet surrendered the revolutionary power of the Petrograd Soviet to the Provisional Government. This was the essence of dual power.

My 1981 book challenged this main narrative, and presented the view that the February Revolution was a combination of two revolutions, first, the revolt of the insurgent masses of workers and soldiers against the existing order, and second, the liberals' revolt against the tsarist regime. I argued, first, that although the insurgent masses overwhelmingly supported the Petrograd Soviet, that body was never constituted as a revolutionary power. Second, I gave more credit than previous historians to the liberals in overthrowing the old regime. By controlling the railways and manipulating information, the liberals stopped the counterrevolutionary expedition and ended the monarchical system. The insurgents and the Petrograd Soviet played little role in this process. Nevertheless, the fundamental goal of the liberal bourgeoisie was to contain the revolution. This goal contradicted the desires of the insurgent masses, who pledged their allegiance to the Petrograd Soviet rather than to the Provisional Government. The only way for the Provisional Government to obtain legitimacy from the insurgent masses was to reach an agreement with the Soviet Executive Committee, which was eager to see the bourgeoisie form the government.

I therefore rejected the generally accepted interpretation of 'transfer of power'. I argued that the Petrograd Soviet was never a revolutionary power, and was not in the position to assert power single-handedly. The 'dual power' – Provisional Government existing under the conditional support of the Petrograd

Soviet – thus reflected the reality of power relations among the three actors of the revolution: the Duma Committee/Provisional Government, the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, and the insurgent masses.

When I did my research for the first edition of the book, some crucial materials were not available. The minutes of the proceedings of the Petrograd Soviet were published in 1991.² But the most important were the records of the Duma Committee, which became available in two versions in 1996 and 2012.³ Furthermore, thanks to Semion Lyndres's relentless pursuit and careful translations, a series of interviews that the Polievktov Commission conducted in 1917 with major players in the February Revolution were published in 2013.⁴

In the meantime, a whole host of monographs have emerged during these thirty years that have contributed to revisions of my interpretations in ways both big and small. I cannot list all these monographs, but I mention here some of the major works, by historians that have had tremendous influence on me since the publication of my first book: Alan Wildman, Michael Melancon, Robert McKean, R.Sh. Ganelin, V.I. Startsev, Vladimir Cherniaev, Boris Kolonitskii, and I.D. Arkhipov, S.V. Kulikov, and F.A. Gaida.⁵

But the most important book that has appeared so far is A.B. Nikolaev's book on power and revolution in the February Revolution. Nikolaev's book is truly a superb book, a game changer. Based on an incredibly wide array of sources, his work advances the interpretation that the Duma Committee, including Rodzianko, acted as a revolutionary power from the very beginning, intent on overthrowing the tsarist regime and replacing it with a liberal bourgeois revolutionary regime. The power held by the Petrograd Soviet paled in comparison. Following research initiated by his mentor, Startsev, he argues that the prestige and power of the Duma Committee reached its pinnacle on 2–3 March, only to be snatched by Miliukov and the Provisional Government, which decided to ditch the Duma as a relic of the old regime.

Although Nikolaev's book focuses on the Duma Committee, and the description of the insurgents is outside the scope of his monograph, his work represents the best of post-Soviet historiography. His writing has greatly contributed

2 Petogradskii Soviet 1991.

3 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996; 'Protokol zasedaniia', Nikolaev 2012.

4 Lyandres 2013. Only Burdzhakov and Chermenskii made use of parts of these interviews.

5 Wildman 1980; McKean 1990; Melancon 1990, 1997, 2000, 2009; Ganelin 1998, Cherniaev 1989, 1996, Startsev 1980; Kolonitskii 2010, 2012; Arkhipov 2000, Kulikov 2004; Gaida 2003. The most recent book is a collection of articles in *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 2014, which appeared after the completion of the work.

to my understanding of the revolutionary process in the February Revolution, and forced me to revise my interpretations.

While in my previous book, I characterised the Duma Committee as a 'reluctant' revolutionary, forced to take revolutionary actions only to contain the revolution, I am now willing to accept Nikolaev's interpretation that the Duma Committee harboured from its inception the revolutionary intention of replacing the old regime with the liberal bourgeois order. This book stresses the 'revolutionary' character of the liberal bourgeoisie more than the previous book. This also forced me to reexamine the role of the liberals during the war before the February Revolution. Secondly, thanks to Startsev and Nikolaev, I have now come to appreciate the inner struggle within the Duma Committee between Miliukov and Rodzianko and the two concepts of the revolutionary government to be formed – that is, the question of whether the Provisional Government should be an executive power responsible to the Duma or whether this government should possess dictatorial power unencumbered by any institution. My previous book did not cover the relationship between the Provisional Government and the Duma Committee adequately. On this issue, I have added a completely new chapter.

The result of my new research is a novel way to understand the birth of dual power that emerged as the most important characteristic of the February Revolution.

Acknowledgements

Many scholars and friends have assisted and supported me over the years. I express my gratitude to those who are listed in the Acknowledgements in the 1981 book.

For this new edition, I thank Michael Melancon, Semion Lyanders, Boris Kolonitskii, Vladimir Cherniaev, Aleksei Kulegin, and above all my dear friend and colleague, Andrei Nikolaev. My frequent correspondence with Nikolaev on sources, interpretations, and his generous assistance while I stayed in St. Petersburg, were an inspiration. Ron Suny, Mark Steinberg, and Rex Wade have been constant supporters of my project throughout the years. The Likhachev Foundation, with the able assistance of Elena Vitenberg, the Rockefeller Bellagio Center, and the Fulbright Fellowship all assisted me with library and archival work and writing, although the primary topic of the fellowships was somewhat different from the February Revolution. I especially owe a great debt to Ekaterina Gavroeva, who provided invaluable assistance in locating obscure materials, reproducing essential sources, and checking missing information for materials unobtainable in the United States. I am eternally grateful to her generosity, thoroughness, and smile.

Without the initial suggestion for revision by Anthony Arnove and Sebastian Budgen, this book would not have been written. I am indebted to Danny Hayward, who did an excellent job in copy-editing the original manuscript.

Last but not least, my greatest appreciation goes to my wife Debbie, who has not only read the entire manuscript many times with insightful comments, but also provided me with encouragement, love, laughter, and, yes, Pilates lessons. Without her, I could not have completed this revision.

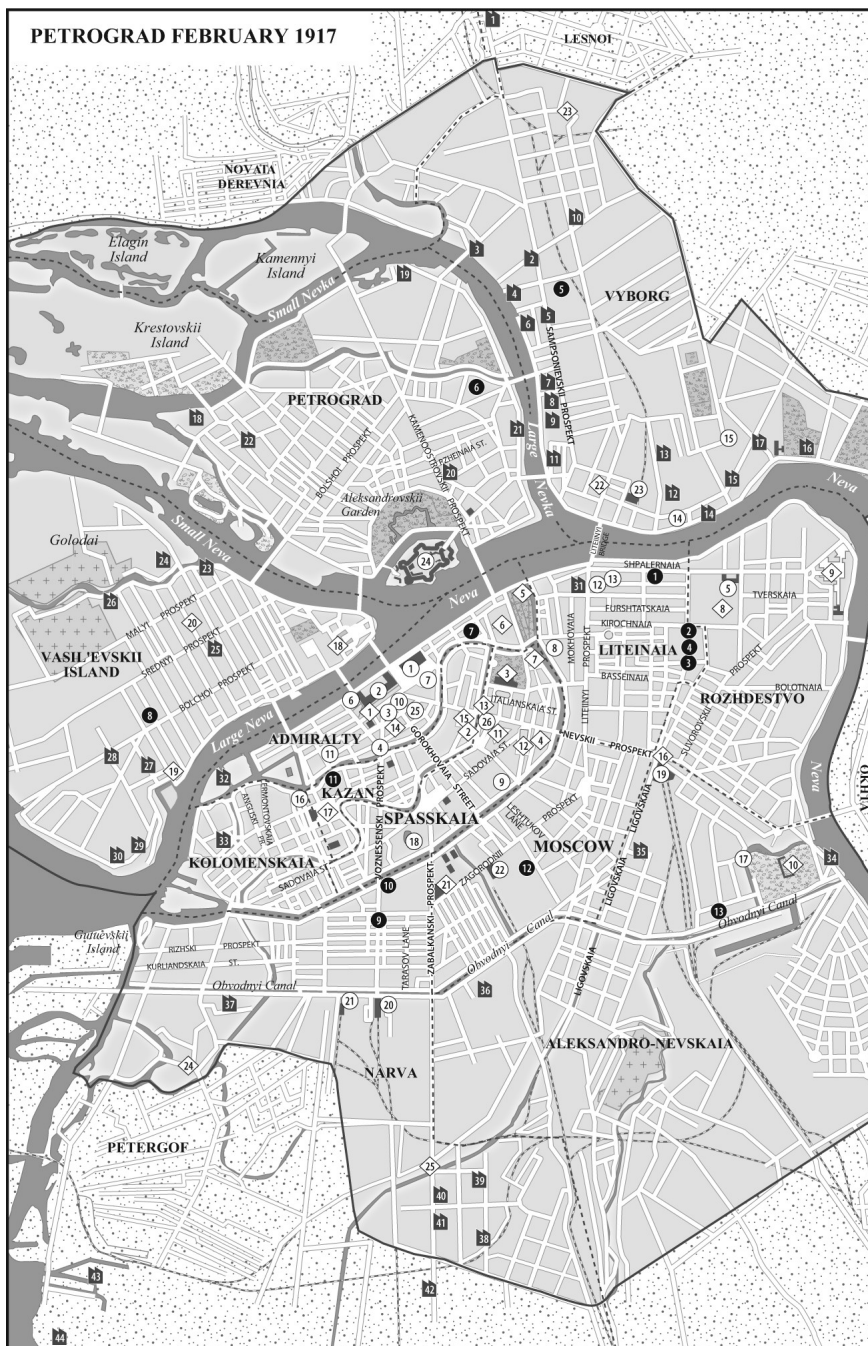
Transliteration and Dates

I have followed the Library of Congress transliteration system with some modifications. I used Nicholas II and Alexandra rather than Nikolai II and Aleksandra, but referred to their son, Aleksei, and to the grand dukes using the original Russian names. I used the original foreign names rather than Russian names when appropriate, but mostly I retained the Russian names such as Shlissel'burg and Petergof. There are some inconsistencies but I used the system with which I feel comfortable. Therefore I used Nikolaevskii Station rather than Nicholas Station, the Kresty Prison rather than the Crosses Prison, the Petropavlovsk Fortress rather than the Fortress of Peter and Paul. As for dates, I

follow the Julian calendar, which is thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar. I followed the British spelling. In direct quotations from American sources, I silently changed the American spelling into British.

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MAP 1 *Petrograd February 1917*

Government Institutions

- ① Winter Palace
- ② Admiralty: Ministry of the Navy
- ③ Ministry of War
- ④ Mariinskii Palace: Council of Ministers, State Council
- ⑤ Tauride Palace: State Duma
- ⑥ Senate
- ⑦ General Staff Building: Army General Staff, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Finance
- ⑧ Corps of Gendarmes
- ⑨ Ministry of Internal Affairs
- ⑩ Gradonachal'stvo
- ⑪ Central Post-Telegraph
- ⑫ Circuit Court
- ⑬ House of Detention
- ⑭ Kresty Prison
- ⑮ Petrograd Women's prison
- ⑯ Lithuanian Castle: Petrograd Correction Prison
- ⑰ Petrograd Exile Prison
- ⑱ Ministry of Transport
- ⑲ Nikolaevskii Station
- ⑳ Warsaw Station
- ㉑ Baltic Station
- ㉒ Tsarskoe Selo Station
- ㉓ Finland Station
- ㉔ Petropavlovsk Fortress
- ㉕ Central Telephone Station
- ㉖ City Duma

Barracks

- ① Lithuanian Regiment
- ② Preobrazhenskii Regiment
- ③ Volynskii Regiment
- ④ Sixth Sapper Battalion
- ⑤ Moscow Regiment
- ⑥ Grenadier Regiment
- ⑦ Pavlovskii Regiment
- ⑧ Finland Regiment
- ⑨ Izmailovskii Regiment
- ⑩ Petrograd Regiment
- ⑪ Keksholm Regiment
- ⑫ Semenovskii Regiment
- ⑬ First & Fourth Cossack Regiment

Major Factories

VYBORG DISTRICT

- 1 Aivaz
- 2 New Lessner
- 3 Nikol'skaia Cotton
- 4 Baranovskii II
- 5 Erikson
- 6 Parviainen
- 7 Sampsonievskiaia Cotton
- 8 Nobel
- 9 Lebedev Jute
- 10 Russian Renault
- 11 Old Lessner
- 12 Promet II
- 13 Petrograd Cartridge I
- 14 Arsenal
- 15 Phoenix
- 16 Petrograd Metal Factory
- 17 Rosenkrantz

PETROGRAD DISTRICT

- 18 Vulkan
- 19 Diuflon
- 20 Langenzippen
- 21 James Beck
- 22 Stetin

VASIL'EVSKII ISLAND

- 23 Siemens-Halliske
- 24 Petrograd Pipe Factory
- 25 Laferm
- 26 Military Horseshoes
- 27 Siemens-Schücker
- 28 Donetsk-lur'evskii
- 29 United Cable
- 30 Baltic Shipyard

LITEINAIA, ADMIRALTY, KOLOMENSKAIA

- 31 Orudinskii
- 32 Admiralty Shipyard I
- 33 Franco-Russian Factory

ALEKSANDRO-NEVSKAIA

- 34 Neva Shipyard
- 35 San-Galli

NARVA

- 36 Petrograd City Gas
- 37 Treugol'nik
- 38 Dinamo II
- 39 Neva Shoes II
- 40 Skorokhod
- 41 Petrograd Wagon
- 42 Siemens-Schücker

PETERGOF

- 43 Putilov
- 44 Putilov Shipyard

Other Important Places

- 1 St. Isaac's Cathedral
- 2 Kazan Cathedral
- 3 Mikhailovskii Palace
- 4 Anichkov Palace
- 5 Summer Garden
- 6 Mars Field
- 7 Mikhailovskii Castle
- 8 Tauride Garden
- 9 Smol'nyi Institute
- 10 Aleksandro-Nevskaia Monastery
- 11 Gostinyi Dvor
- 12 Public Library
- 13 Evropeiskaia Hotel
- 14 Hotel Astoria
- 15 Kazan Square
- 16 Znamenskaia Square
- 17 Theater Square
- 18 Petrograd Imperial University
- 19 Mining Institute
- 20 Bestuzhev Women's College
- 21 Technological Institute
- 22 Military Medical Institute
- 23 Forestry Institute
- 24 Narva Gate
- 25 Moscow Arch of Triumph

List of Abbreviations

ARR	<i>Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii</i>
KA	<i>Krasnyi arkhiv</i>
KL	<i>Krasnaia letopis'</i>
PR	<i>Proletarskaia revoliutsiia</i>
RL	<i>Russkaia letopis'</i>
RGIA	<i>Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (St. Petersburg) formerly TsGIA, Tsengral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (Leningrad)</i>
GARF	<i>Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Rossiiskoi federatsii, formerly TsGAOR, Tsenral'nyi Gasudarstvennyi arkhiv Oktiabr'skoi Revoliutsii</i>
OR RNB	<i>Otdel rukopisi, Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka (St. Petersburg)</i>
TsGA SPb	<i>Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga</i>

Archival abbreviations: f: fond; op: opis'; d: delo; l: list; ll: listy

PART 1

Russia and the First World War



Russia Enters the War

Formation of the 'Sacred Union'

In 1914 Russia was hit by a severe drought. Not a drop of rain fell between Easter and the summer in most of European Russia. The crops died. A smell of burning trees and grass hung in the air. Dust blown from dry fields yellowed the city streets. Frightened, superstitious people whispered to one another that this was a bad omen for the years to come. Capturing this mood, Anna Akhmatova wrote in her poem, 'July 1914':

The sun has become a sign of God's disfavor;
Since Easter no rain has sprinkled the fields.
A one-legged passer-by came and,
Alone in the courtyard, said:
'Terrible times are drawing near.
Soon the earth will be packed with fresh graves.
You must expect famine, earthquakes, pestilence,
And the eclipse of the heavenly bodies'.¹

On 19 July 1914 (Old style), Tsar Nicholas II, Emperor of Russia, declared war against Germany and Austria to 'preserve the honor, dignity, and unity of Russia'.² Thus Russia plunged into the First World War – the fateful war that was to lead to revolutions and a brutal civil war. During the seven years' savagery, Russia underwent unprecedented social and political convulsions. She entered the war as an obsolete autocracy, and left it as the world's first socialist state. The complexion of the world order and the lives of millions of people in Russia were to be affected by the changes that took place during this period.

But in July 1914 few foresaw the catastrophe ahead. After the declaration of war the nation was swept by a patriotic euphoria. On the day that Nicholas II issued the manifesto declaring a state of war, people assembled in front of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg carrying portraits of the tsar and holy icons. The

¹ Akhmatova in Obolensky 1965, p. 319.

² 'Voina ob"iavlena', *Birzhevyia vedomosti*, 20 July 1914, p. 1; for Russia's entry into the war, see Lieven 1983.

emperor and the empress came out onto the balcony to greet the crowds filling the massive Palace Square. Only a decade earlier, crowds carrying the tsar's portrait and holy icons had been fired upon by the tsar's troops. The incident, known as 'Bloody Sunday', had marked the beginning of the 1905 Revolution and had shattered the naive trust of the Russian people in the tsar. But on the fateful day of July 1914 the jubilant hurrahs of the crowd echoed in the square. Some knelt and crossed themselves. For a brief moment Nicholas felt that the tsar and people were one again.³

Spontaneous patriotic demonstrations continued for a week in Petersburg, which was then given the more Russian-sounding name of Petrograd. People gathered in front of the Winter Palace, the war ministry, and the British, French, and Serbian embassies. Anti-German sentiment was rampant. Crowds ransacked the stores and offices owned by Germans, or by those with the misfortune to have German surnames. On 20 July a huge demonstration was staged in front of the German Embassy in Isaakskiaia Square near St. Isaac's Cathedral. The participants rampaged through the building, throwing papers and furniture from the windows. They built a huge bonfire in the square, and finally, amid the enthusiastic cheers of the crowd, the mobs knocked down the ornamental structure atop the building. One embassy employee was killed in the *mêlée*. The government was frightened by such outbursts, even if in support of the government, and the *gradonachal'nik* – city governor – of Petrograd, Prince A.N. Obolenskii, banned further demonstrations.⁴

Patriotism pervaded almost all segments of society. The liberal opposition centred in the State Duma (the Lower House of the Russian parliament), which since its inception in 1906 had been at loggerheads with the tsar and his bureaucracy, decided to withdraw its criticism of the government for the sake of national unity. A one-day session of the Duma and the State Council, the upper house, was convened on 26 July. Before the session, the members of both houses

3 What Nicholas II did that day – departing from Petergof by yacht en route to Petersburg; reading the manifesto; greeting the crowd from the balcony of the Winter Palace – is masterfully described in Kolonitskii 2010, pp. 73–7.

4 'Na Issakskiaia ploshchad', *Birzheviia vedomosti*, 23 July 1914, p. 3. The *gradonachal'nik*, appointed by and directly responsible to the minister of internal affairs, was entrusted with the task of securing peace and order in the city. He controlled the police, gendarmerie, and the secret police network, known as the *Okhrana*. The Petrograd *gradonachal'stvo*, the office of the *gradonachal'nik*, was located at the corner of Gorokhovaia and Admiralteiskii Prospekt. Prince Obolenskii was *gradonachal'nik* of Petrograd from 1914 to 1916, when he was dismissed due to the pressure exerted by the empress and A.D. Protopopov, minister of internal affairs.

were invited to the Winter Palace where the emperor implored the members of the parliaments to do their duty to the end.

His speech was greeted enthusiastically. M.V. Rodzianko, chairman of the Duma, replied, 'With a firm belief in the grace of God, we will grudge no sacrifices until the foe is vanquished and Russia's honor vindicated'. Tears in his eyes, Nicholas made the sign of the cross. A hymn, 'Lord, Save Thy People', spontaneously resounded in the sumptuous Nikolaevskii Hall. Back in the Tauride Palace, the site of the Duma, the entire membership, with the exception of a small number of socialist deputies, solemnly pledged their support of the government. The Central Committee of the Kadet party, centre of the liberal opposition, had voted almost unanimously for their unconditional support of the government and suspension of criticism. Only F.I. Rodichev had raised an objection: 'Do you really think that those fools could bring us a victory?' The Kadets' statement, written by its leader, P.N. Miliukov, proclaimed: 'We are united in this struggle; we set no conditions and we demand nothing. On the scales of war, we simply place our firm will for victory'. The 'sacred union', it appeared, bonded the tsar and the liberal opposition.⁵

Patriotic fervour seized a segment of the workers as well. Their strike movement, which had gained momentum after the massacre at the Lena gold mine in 1912, had reached its peak on the eve of the war. At the beginning of July a general strike had been declared in St. Petersburg, and barricades had been erected in the streets. After the declaration of war, however, the strikes quickly dissipated.⁶ Patriotic sentiment appeared so widespread among the workers that the Bolshevik activists admitted that it was physically dangerous even to speak against the war.⁷

In July 1914, Russia was, it seemed, a nation united. The liberal opposition and the workers' movement, which before the outbreak of the war had brought the country to the brink of revolution, disappeared. The liberals pledged to withdraw their criticism and the workers, if not drafted to the army, silently returned to work benches. This picture of national unity brought tears to Nicholas's eyes. Such was the hypnotic hold of the war's outbreak, and it lasted until the first major defeat. Yet while the crowds roamed the streets of Petrograd in a frenzy of support for the war, Akhmatova, moved by her uncanny premonitions, predicted the coming of a holocaust:

5 Rodzianko 1973 pp. 109–11; Kolonitskii 2010 pp. 83–5; Rodichev quoted in Mel'gunov 1931, p. 14; Miliukov, 1955, vol. 2, p. 190; also see the abridged translation, Miliukov, 1967, p. 306.

6 Fleer 1926a, pp. 5–8; McKean 1990, p. 318.

7 For different interpretations of the workers' reaction to the war, see McKean 1990, pp. 357–8.

A sweet smell of juniper
 Comes floating from the burning woods.
 The soldiers' wives bend over their children and moan,
 The weeping of widows echoes through the village.

Not in vain were the prayers offered;
 The earth yearned for rain.
 The trampled fields were sprinkled
 With warm and red moisture.

The empty sky is low, so low
 And the voice of the one who prays sounds soft:
 'They are wounding Your most holy body,
 And casting lots for Your garments'.⁸

Agony of Modernisation

Akhmatova's poetic imagery of a one-legged peasant forecasting the savagery of modern warfare was a fitting picture of Russia's entry into the war. During the war the old and the new clashed more fiercely than in any other country – a clash that was eventually to tear the nation apart.

Russia at the turn of the century witnessed a mixture of modernity and backwardness. In the last decade of the nineteenth century Russia underwent spectacular industrialisation that lifted the country from slumbering backwardness onto the path of modernisation. Factories mushroomed, banks and commercial establishments were built, trams ran in major streets, and a vibrant civil society with a growing and confident bourgeoisie was emerging. But it was precisely modernisation itself that sharpened the contrast between modernity and backwardness. As Russia underwent profound change, there occurred what Leopold Haimson calls the 'dual polarisation' of urban Russia: the polarisation between autocracy and society (*vlast'* and *obshchestvo*) and the polarisation between the privileged class (*verkh*) and the lower classes (*nizy*).⁹

8 Akhmatova, in Obolensky 1965, pp. 319–20. Akhmatova's fear was not merely a premonition. The mobilisation was accompanied not merely by patriotic demonstrations in the capital, but also by a wave of spontaneous lootings of wine and food stores, leading to violent riots against government buildings and police at many mobilisation centres in the provinces. Kanishchev 1995, p. 37; Sanborn 2000, pp. 275–9; Sanborn 2003, pp. 30–1.

9 Haimson 1964, pp. 619–42, Haimson 1965, pp. 1–22; Haimson 2000, 848–75. *Vlast'* literally

The 'parting of the ways' of the educated class in Russia between the official bureaucracy that stood for autocracy and the intelligentsia who demanded internal reforms had occurred already in the early half of the nineteenth century, but the impact of modernisation made the conflict much sharper. To the emerging Russian bourgeoisie, modernisation meant change not merely on an economic level, but a restructuring of the political and social system. Especially important was their demand for constitutionalism and the establishment of a national representative body. While the autocracy jealously guarded its obsolete system of government anchored on the absolute power of the emperor, the society groped for reforms of the political and social system to limit autocracy and make the political system responsible to the democratically elected parliament. The tug of war between autocracy and society constituted one of the fundamental conflicts in tsarist Russia.

Modernisation also deepened another fundamental schism of Russian society. Industrialisation had created a new class – the industrial proletariat. Most workers came from the village and kept their close ties with the village communes. Thrust into the urban environment, they tended machinery for more than ten hours a day, and lived in crowded, unsanitary urban ghettos. The wall that separated the working class from the privileged was more visible in the cities than in the villages. The workers saw the world divided into the poor who had to work for long hours for meagre wages and the privileged who enjoyed the fruit of modernity. The hunger of the emerging working class to achieve a higher economic and cultural level, combined with the spread of literacy, reinforced even more their dark anger and envy of the world from which they were politically and socially excluded. Factories and mills brought the workers together, welding them into a cohesive, volatile class, and the concentration of workers in a few large cities, particularly St. Petersburg

means 'power', and it was used to mean the absolute, arbitrary power of the tsar and his bureaucracy. *Obshchestvennost'* is an abstract noun derived from *obshchestvo*, which is often translated as 'society'. On the one hand, it was the society that existed outside *vlast'*, but on the other, it excluded the workers and the peasantry. Specifically, the Duma, the zemstvos, the municipal self-government, industrialists, and all sorts of professional classes were included in *obshchestvo*. The adjective *obshchestvennyi* means 'of *obshchestvo*', but there is no satisfactory English equivalent. The *obshchestvennye deiateli*, for instance, were activists who attempted to extend the power of *obshchestvo* by restricting the absolute power of *vlast'*. In translating *obshchestvennyi* I have often used the adjective 'liberal', and at times 'of society'. The reader should be warned that in most cases the term 'liberal' is used in place of *obshchestvennyi*, but does not neatly fit the definition of political liberalism in Western Europe.

and Moscow, contributed to the rapid growth of class consciousness. In dealing with the working class, the tsarist government clumsily resorted almost exclusively to repressive measures, reinforcing the workers' sense of alienation from the established social order. As a result, the Russian workers became a uniquely radical social class. The Russian proletariat, as Marx said about the German proletariat, embodied the wrongs of society, representing all the lower classes – *nizy* – and challenged the privileged social order – *verkh* – that is to say, not only the autocratic regime, but also the bourgeois social order.

The Constitutional Experiment after the 1905 Revolution

'Dual polarisation' ripped Russian society apart in 1905. In this first Russian Revolution, two revolutions were simultaneously taking place: a revolution of society against autocracy and the revolt of the lower class against the privileged class. But the tsarist regime managed to prolong its life by promising a limited constitutional concession. Nicholas issued the October Manifesto in 1905, in which he guaranteed basic civil rights to all citizens and promised to establish a national legislative body known as the State Duma. What followed after the October Manifesto was, however, a series of political backlashes that culminated in the Fundamental Laws in 1906. Contrary to the expectations of the liberals, the legislative body was to be bicameral. Together with the State Duma, the State Council was created, with half of its members directly appointed by the tsar. The Duma was encumbered by all kinds of restrictions. One of the glaring examples of the Duma's powerlessness was Article 87 of the Fundamental Laws, which gave the government emergency power to enact a law while the legislative chambers were not in session. The Duma had no power over appointments and dismissals of ministers, which remained the exclusive prerogative of the tsar. The council of ministers was not responsible to the parliament. The Duma had no legal power to check the conduct of the tsar and his bureaucracy.

It was not surprising, therefore, that the political concessions did not satisfy the liberals, but rather contributed to their intensified frustration. The first two Dumas were stormy confrontations with the government and were quickly dissolved long before they completed their terms. Anxious to create a Duma willing to cooperate with the government, P.A. Stolypin, the powerful chairman of the council of ministers, rewrote the electoral law on 3 June 1907 in such a way as to assure a conservative majority – an act known as Stolypin's coup d'état, virtually disfranchising the working class. The Third Duma, in which

the moderate Octobrists replaced the liberal Kadets¹⁰ as the majority party, satisfactorily met Stolypin's expectation and demonstrated more willingness than the preceding two Dumas to cooperate with the government. It was the only Duma that completed its full term. But the rapprochement between government and society was short-lived. Stolypin was assassinated in 1911. Although the election for the Fourth Duma in 1912 returned the Octobrists as the majority party, it did not assure the continued cooperation between the Duma and the government. The leader of the Octobrist party, A.I. Guchkov, openly advocated reopening the attack on the government. Within the Kadet party, which never forgave the government for the change of the electoral law, the left wing that voiced the return to a more radical programme gained momentum. The celebrated Beilis case in 1911, in which a Jewish carpenter was scapegoated by the inept, corrupt, anti-Semitic judicial system, became a rallying point for the liberals against the government. It appeared that after 1912 government and society were again on a collision course.

Stolypin's Agrarian Reform

Against the background of rapid social transformation, there was a resurgence of social tension. Russian industry, which had suffered a setback after 1900, experienced a sudden upsurge after 1910. One of the factors that contributed to the second wave of industrialisation was Stolypin's agrarian reform, which made excess labour in the countryside available to industry. For the first time, the tsarist government attacked the village communes, which lay at the foundation of the agrarian problem in Russia. Stolypin attempted to dismantle the village communes in the effort to create conservative farmers who could be counted on to support the regime. The village communes were dissolved, individual peasants appropriated lands, and some even consolidated them. But in the process thousands of peasants who did not benefit from the reform migrated to the city. The sudden influx, though helpful to industry, had an immensely negative effect on the social stability of urban Russia. The embittered peasants were more than eager to join radical action against the established order.¹¹ The workers' strike movement, which had been suppressed during the 'period of reaction' under Stolypin, was suddenly revitalised after the government troops' short-sighted firing on the mine workers at the Lena gold mine.

10 For discussion on the liberal political parties, see below.

11 Haimson 1964, pp. 853–4.

Resurgence of the Strike Movement

In protest against the Lena massacre, close to 100,000 workers in St. Petersburg struck between 14 and 22 April 1912. The workers continued to carry the momentum of the strike movement into 1913 and 1914 up to the outbreak of war. Not only did the number of strikes and participants increase, but also the workers' movement became more violent. This radicalism was expressed in the growing influence of the Bolsheviks among the workers at the expense of the Mensheviks. The climax of the revived labour movement came two weeks before the outbreak of war in the St. Petersburg workers' general strike. The leadership of the strike shifted to younger, more impatient activists, and even the Bolsheviks were losing control of the militant workers. According to Haimson, many thousands of workers, joined by women and children, erected barricades. Order was not restored until 15 July, only four days before the outbreak of war.¹² One is struck by the uncanny resemblance between July 1914 and February 1917.

The Impact of the War on the Political Situation in Russia

But why didn't the workers' strike develop into a national revolution in July 1914 as it did in February 1917? The obvious reason was the outbreak of war. Patriotic fervour engulfed the society. The war and the 'sacred union' gave the government an excuse to suppress the workers' movement. But as Haimson points out, even without the war it is doubtful that the St. Petersburg general strike could have led to a national revolution. It failed to set off a nation-wide political strike. Moreover, it failed to mobilise active support among other groups in society. Although the polarisation between state and society had reached an impasse by 1914, the liberals sensed that they were alienated from the masses. Frightened by the violence of their revolt, they shrank from alliance with the working class against tsarism.¹³ The war gave liberals, at least initially, a respite in which they could find an escape from the impasse in their confrontation with the regime, on the one hand, and from that narrow, dangerous spot in the corner where they would have to choose between revolution and counterrevolution, on the other. That was a crucial difference between July 1914 and February 1917. A revolution limited only to the working-class insurrection

¹² Ibid., p. 642.

¹³ Haimson 1965, p. 12; McKean 1990, pp. 315–17.

without involving the liberal opposition would have little chance for success. There was also another factor that accounted for the difference between July 1914 and February 1917. Prior to July 1914, the army remained generally unaffected by the increasing social and political tensions outside. It took twenty months' war to witness the deepening of polarisation within the army to the extent that the military authorities could no longer count on the reliability of the military to prop up the regime.

The question of whether the war retarded or facilitated the revolutionary process must be examined in this context. The outbreak of war initially contributed to a lessening of tensions: the strike movement dissipated, and the liberals made a pledge for the 'sacred union'. But it was merely temporary. In the final analysis it was the war that ripened the revolutionary crisis far beyond its level in July 1914. The strike movement soon regained its pre-war vitality, and the peculiar wartime conditions sharpened its intensity. The revolutionary parties gradually restored their organisational strength, more hardened and determined by the repression of the tsarist police. The *krizis verkhov* (crisis of power) reached such a point that reconciliation between state and society was no longer possible, and the liberals sensed with trepidation that the dreadful moment they would be forced to choose between revolution and counterrevolution was approaching day by day. Finally, the war made the military more vulnerable to tensions from outside. The masses of new recruits in the army brought with them the same kind of radicalism that the uprooted peasants had brought to the cities. If city life reinforced the peasants' simplified worldview of the division between the rich and the poor, the soldiers' life was more directly reminiscent of the pre-reform life of serfs on the landlord's estates. Moreover, polarisation between state and society had progressed during the war to such a point that a majority of the officers' corps had, at least psychologically, deserted the regime.

The Emperor, the Empress, and Rasputin

The challenge that the new era posed to Russia was more enormous, complex and dangerous than any other in its recent history. Unfortunately, however, Russia was under the rule of an autocrat with limited ability to face the problems that confronted the country. As Richard Pipes puts it, 'Russia had the worst of both worlds: a tsar who lacked the intelligence and character to rule yet insisted on playing the autocrat'.¹⁴ If Russia had developed a system of government,

14 Pipes 1990, p. 57.

either a constitutional monarchy or a *Rechtsstaat* (government based on law), in which a continuity of policy was assured regardless of the personal ability of the monarch, Nicholas's limitations would have mattered little. But Nicholas II considered it his sacred duty to uphold the principles of autocracy. When the representatives of the local self-governments called zemstvos appealed to the newly crowned tsar in 1895 to 'crown the edifice' of the Great Reforms by granting a constitution, Nicholas dismissed this petition as a 'senseless dream' and pledged to 'safeguard the principles of autocracy as firmly and steadfastly' as his father Alexander III did.¹⁵ He did not enjoy statecraft, and he would have gladly relinquished it but for the onerous burden to maintain autocracy. To safeguard the principle of autocracy that he had inherited from his autocratic father and to bequeath it to his son became the most important objective of his reign. His understanding of statecraft was thus peculiarly personal and private. To him, there was no distinction between the dynasty and the state.

Nicholas granted constitutional concessions in 1905 reluctantly, only under the pressure of the revolution. He considered the Duma a thorn in his notion of the invincibility of autocracy. But even after the institution of the quasi-parliamentary system after 1906, the tsar retained privileges unknown to sovereigns in Western Europe. All executive authority throughout the empire was concentrated in him; the appointment and dismissal of ministers were matters of his will alone; the council of ministers, equivalent to a cabinet, was responsible only to him. All the ministers and the bureaucrats of the vast bureaucracy were to serve the sovereign – *gosudar*' – not the state – *gosudarstvo*. Although, as Haimson points out, the system of united government created by Witte and Stolypin contributed to the effective functioning of the cabinet and served as 'an effective political buffer between the sovereign and the body politic', this system was not firmly grounded in law, and was in danger of being destroyed by the arbitrary actions taken by the tsar or by the chairman of the council of ministers.

Although the parliamentary system imposed a restriction on his absolute power, the tsar still enjoyed vast privileges in dealing with the Duma. No laws became effective without his approval; he was assured of the conservative majority in the State Council with the right to appoint half of its members; he had the right to dissolve or prorogue the Duma whenever he deemed necessary; and he could ignore the Duma entirely with his prerogative to use Article 87.¹⁶

15 Ibid., p. 59.

16 Gronsky and Astrov 1923, pp. 3–25. The best work on the constitution in Russia is Szeftel

Nevertheless, dissatisfied as he was with the new institution, he appears to have learned how to live with it and even at times preferred to use the Duma for his own purposes. It is difficult to describe Nicholas's own political philosophy, since he did not reveal his thoughts even to his closest advisors. Historians would look in vain in his diary and his personal correspondence for clues to his ideas. Nonetheless it appears that he vacillated between advisors favouring cooperation with the Duma and reactionary advisors who advocated a hostile policy toward it; he appears to have skilfully manipulated the two camps of advisors to fit the needs of particular moments. His intellectual limitations may have prevented him from addressing himself squarely to the fundamental questions that faced Russia and he may have lacked the strategy to win the war, but he displayed an amazing array of sophisticated tactical skills to win many battles.

One of Nicholas's most influential advisors was his wife, Empress Alexandra Fedorovna. Born in a small German principality, Alexandra came to Russia to marry Nicholas in 1894. Outwardly shy but inwardly quite stubborn, she immediately alienated her future relatives and the St. Petersburg aristocracy. On her first day in Russia, immediately after the sudden death of Alexander III, Alexandra saw how the relatives were slighting her weak-willed fiancé. Henceforward, the empress became Nicholas's chief counsellor, passionately committed to the preservation of autocracy.

Loathing the frivolous upper class in St. Petersburg, Alexandra withdrew to a private life in Tsarskoe Selo centred around her family and a few friends. Her inclination toward religious mysticism was heightened by the birth of their haemophilic son, Alexis – Aleksei Nikolaevich. Stricken by guilt and driven by despair because modern science offered no cure for her sick boy, Alexandra sought a remedy in mysticism. It was under these circumstances that Grigorii Rasputin, an illiterate *starets* (holy man) from Siberia, appeared at the imperial court. The tsarina's trusted friend, unhappy, ugly, crippled Anna Vyrubova, who was a devoted admirer of Rasputin, often served as liaison between Alexandra and Rasputin. The *muzhik* from Siberia with his sensual goat-like body odour, hypnotic eyes, and insatiable sexual appetite, immediately hit it off well with the corrupt upper class. Rasputin discredited the authority of the tsar, but to the consternation of the decent elements in society, 'Our Friend', as the imperial couple called him, remained a 'man of God' to the empress. She acquired the habit of viewing the world in terms of 'We and They'. Those who dared to speak

1976. As for the system of united government, see Haimson 2000, p. 86g; also Anan'ich and Ganelin 1999, pp. 231–2.

against 'Us' became 'They', her enemy. Although Nicholas did not completely share Alexandra's fanatical belief in the 'holy man', he adamantly refused to yield to public pressure to get rid of Rasputin, since he believed that this was a family matter in which the public had no business meddling. As the Beilis case had become a rallying point of public outcry, the *Rasputinshchina* (bad era of Rasputin) became the symbol of tsarist intransigence. The tsarist power appeared to make a mockery out of the indignant public outcry and began to alienate the very section of society with which it could have allied to counter the approaching storm from below. The *krizis verkhov* had begun.¹⁷

The Tsar's Government: Goremykin, Maklakov, and Krivoshein

Nicholas's government at the outbreak of war was headed by the tsar's faithful servant, I.L. Goremykin, who had replaced Count V.N. Kokovtsov in January 1914, as the chairman of the Council of Ministers. But Goremykin was overshadowed by two powerful men in the cabinet, the reactionary minister of internal affairs, Nikolai A. Maklakov, and the progressive minister of agriculture, A.V. Krivoshein. After the unsatisfactory Fourth Duma election in 1912, official circles had discussed the possibility of abolishing the Duma altogether or depriving it of its legislative functions. N.A. Maklakov was the champion of this policy.

After the outbreak of war, Maklakov strongly argued in favour of the dissolution of the Duma in wartime apart from ceremonial functions. But Krivoshein favoured cooperation with the Duma, and proposed to reconvene the Duma not later than 1 February 1915. In the end the Council of Ministers adopted a compromise policy, accepting Krivoshein's proposal with a possibility of further postponement. Nicholas approved this decision. As long as the Duma overwhelmingly supported the 'sacred union' and did not protest dissolution after its one-day session in July, there was no reason to adopt Maklakov's policy and risk arousing a sleeping dog.¹⁸ While adopting Krivoshein's moderate policy on the reconvening, however, Nicholas allowed Maklakov to pursue a repressive policy against the liberal opposition. Censorship was introduced the day that Russia declared war; the ministry of internal affairs harassed the voluntary organisations. Maklakov attempted to limit the activities of the volun-

17 For depictions of Nicholas II and Alexandra, see the fascinating account by Kolonitskii 2010.

18 Pearson 1977, pp. 12–13.

tary organisations to caring for the sick and wounded, strictly forbidding their engagement in political matters. But the Duma accepted its dissolution without a whimper. When the Bolshevik deputies were arrested and deported to Siberia in flagrant violation of the parliamentary immunity extended to the members of the Duma, no protest was raised among the liberal politicians. In Pearson's words, in late 1914 the government achieved what it had failed to do in peacetime – it reduced the Duma in practice from a legislative to a consultative assembly.¹⁹

The Duma Liberals: The Octobrists

The composition of the Fourth Duma was (viewed on an ideological spectrum beginning from the left): Bolsheviks, 5, Mensheviks, 7, Trudoviks, 10, Progressists, 47, Kadets, 57, Octobrists, 85, Centre, 33, Progressive Nationalists, 20, Nationalists, 60, and Rightists, 64.²⁰ The Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks were Marxist revolutionaries, and the Trudoviks, led by A.F. Kerenskii, formed an independent Duma faction that stood close to the Socialist Revolutionary party. The Centrists, Nationalists, and the Rightists constituted the right wing of the Duma, and stood for the monarchist principle, Russian nationalism, and the protection of landlords' interests. The largest bloc in the Fourth Duma was the liberals – Octobrists, Kadets, and Progressists.

The October Manifesto issued by Nicholas II in the 1905 Revolution had divided the Russian liberal movement. Those who accepted Nicholas's concessions, which promised basic freedoms and the creation of the parliamentary system, formed the 'Union of October 17' or the Octobrist party, while the radical wing of the liberals, who refused to accept the October Manifesto as the basis of the Russian constitutional government, created the Constitutional Democratic party, the Kadets. The Octobrists, supported by the liberal-minded landowning class as well as the industrialists, was headed by one of the most colourful figures in Russian politics in the early twentieth century, A.I. Guchkov. Born to a wealthy merchant family in Moscow, Guchkov was closely connected with the Moscow financial and industrial circles. Adventurous by temperament, he had participated as a volunteer in the Boer War and in the uprising in Macedonia in 1903. When the Octobrist party gained the majority in the Third Duma, he became the Duma chairman, contributing to the stabilisation of the relationship between the government and the Duma. Guchkov and Stolypin respected each other and established a good working relationship, but

19 Ibid., p. 30.

20 Ibid., p. 15.

Guchkov attacked Rasputin and earned the everlasting enmity of the imperial couple. After he fought a duel with Colonel S.N. Miasoedov (of whom more will be said later), Guchkov was forced to resign as chairman of the Duma in 1912, but he continued to lead the Octobrist party. During the war Guchkov was one of the central figures in liberal politics both as a leader in the Central War Industries Committee and as one of the originators of the conspiratorial schemes for a palace coup.²¹

The Octobrists supported the realisation of basic freedoms but opposed the right of workers to strike and to form trade unions in defence industries. Reflecting the landowners' interest, the Octobrists opposed the alienation of the landlords' land. Its conservative orientation was also reflected in its opposition to any kind of national autonomy within the empire. The Octobrists became the majority party in both the Third and the Fourth Dumas, but the election for the Fourth Duma increased the number of the more progressive industrialists within the party. Although in the Third Duma the Octobrists had cooperated with the government, Guchkov and his supporters, including twenty Duma deputies, departed from this policy in 1913, and voiced strong criticism of the government. A more conservative group of Octobrists, sixty-five Duma deputies, protested this radical direction and split from the party, forming the 'Zemstvist-Octobrists'. This group was led by M.V. Rodzianko, who succeeded Guchkov as chairman of the Duma. A heavy-set landowner from Ekaterinoslav, nicknamed the 'Bear', Rodzianko lacked Guchkov's adventurous spirit and constantly defended parliamentary methods in achieving liberal reforms. During the war his moderation frustrated the more radical liberals but became a source of hope among the conservative elements of society. Although the Octobrists provided the key to the formation of any majority in the Duma, they quickly lost their influence outside the Duma. In 1915, they ceased publication of their newspaper and the Central Committee of the party seldom met. The party members splintered into various groups centred around such leaders as Guchkov, Rodzianko, S.I. Shidlovskii, and I.V. Godnev.²²

The Duma Liberals: The Kadets

The Kadets, the party of the liberal intelligentsia, represented the radical wing of the Russian liberal movement, standing for the achievement of fundamental freedoms and the end of discrimination based on class, nationality, or reli-

²¹ Guchkov 1993.

²² For the activities of the Octobrist party, see Diakin 1967a, pp. 30–3; Pearson 1977, pp. 16–17. See also Hosking 1973; Pinchuk 1974.

gion. Unlike the Octobrists, who believed that a constitutional system could be built on the October Manifesto, the Kadets maintained that to achieve this goal it would be necessary to create a 'responsible government' – a government responsible to the parliament, elected on the basis of a universal, direct, equal, and secret ballot. Furthermore, they advocated independence and increased power for the local self-governments, the *zemstvos* and the municipal governments. In their social policy, the Kadet party advocated a progressive income tax, an eight-hour working day, the workers' right to strike and to form trade unions, compulsory government health insurance, and the expropriation of land with compensation to the landowners.²³ It supported the autonomy of national minorities but opposed any move toward independence from the empire.

According to William Rosenberg, two principles were foremost in the Kadet party: a commitment to 'the welfare of Russian society as a whole, rather than to the advancement of any particular social class or socioeconomic interest', and 'a veneration of Russia as a state'. The party perceived itself as transcending all narrow class interests and striving to achieve its ends for the welfare and freedom of all people. The Kadets advocated a social harmony in which 'worker and peasant interests could not be advanced at the expense of the gentry and bourgeoisie, while Russia's upper classes could not exploit her workers and peasants'.²⁴ They were also passionate nationalists, advocating a strong international position against Russia's adversaries. Therefore, the Kadets enthusiastically supported Russia's participation in the war and maintained that all citizens of Russia, regardless of class and nationality, should exert themselves to the utmost to win the war. Ultimately, however, the Kadets' fundamental posture of transcending class interests put them at a disadvantage: the conservatives accused them of being too radical, while socialists and the working class viewed them as representing the interests of the Russian bourgeoisie.

Yet, from its inception in October 1905, the Kadet party provided unmistakable intellectual leadership within the Russian liberal movement. The party was led by P.N. Miliukov, a former history professor at Moscow University, well known as the author of numerous monographs on various aspects of Russian history. Brilliant, dogmatic, and arrogant, Miliukov exerted dominant leadership over the party, maintaining precarious unity threatened by the struggle between its right wing, represented by Vasilii Maklakov and P.V. Struve, and its left wing, led by N.N. Nekrasov and Prince D.I. Shakhovskoi. Later during

23 Rosenberg 1974, pp. 15–17.

24 Ibid., pp. 13–17.

the war Miliukov became the acknowledged leader of the Progressive Bloc, the Duma's liberal coalition formed in the summer of 1915.²⁵ The challenge to Miliukov's leadership came from the left, led by Nekrasov. Dissatisfied with Miliukov's moderate policy and strict adherence to parliamentary politics, the left Kadets called for the return to earlier radical programmes. Threatened by the challenge from the left, with which the provincial Kadets and Moscow faction had increasingly sympathised, Miliukov welcomed 'sacred unity' not only for patriotic reasons but also for saving the party from internal schism.²⁶

The Duma Liberals: The Progressists

The Progressist party was, according to Soviet-era historian V.S. Diakin, 'in its composition the most bourgeois party of all'.²⁷ The industrialists and financial leaders in Moscow, who had become disenchanted with the political and economic policy of the government, formed the party in 1911. A growing sense of independence as a bourgeois class was most keenly felt in the textile industry, which was least influenced by the government. Two Moscow industrialists, P.P. Riabushinskii and A.I. Konovalov, and liberal intellectual I.N. Efremov were the leading figures of the newly founded party. Owner of a large textile company and a large Moscow bank, Riabushinskii became spokesman for the growing Russian national bourgeoisie. In 1909 he began the publication in Moscow of *Utro Rossii*, a newspaper proclaiming itself to be the organ of 'the third estate of contemporary Russia', which intended to take over the nobility and bureaucracy. Konovalov, owner of textile concerns in Kostroma and Moscow, was a strong advocate of social peace between capital and labour, to be achieved by giving the workers the right to strike and form trade unions. He had formulated a plan for the joint struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat against the tsarist regime, and for that purpose had created an Information Committee in 1914, in which even the Bolsheviks briefly participated.²⁸

But the ambition of Riabushinskii and Konovalov to create a party that would embody the interests of the entire Russian bourgeoisie did not materialise. This failure can be attributed to the impossibility of uniting two groups with vastly differing political outlooks: the financial and industrial oligarchs in St. Petersburg, and the Moscow industrialists supported by smaller provincial industrialists. The first group formed the conservative St. Petersburg Associ-

25 On Miliukov, see Riha 1960; see Miliukov 1955; Miliukov, 1967.

26 Pearson 1977, pp. 18–9; Haimson 1965, pp. 3, 4; Haimson 2000, pp. 860–3; Gaida 2003, pp. 45–52.

27 Diakin 1967a, p. 33.

28 Haimson 1964, pp. 4–8.

ation of Factory Owners, led by such financial magnates as A.I. Putilov (head of the Russo-Asian Bank) and A.I. Vyshnegradskii (head of the International Bank). This group proved to be more docile politically, preferring to gain profit from their close cooperation with the bureaucracy. In contrast, the Moscow and provincial industrialists, who were generally excluded from the special favours extended by the government to the St. Petersburg magnates, were critical of the government. The Progressist party not only failed to lure the St. Petersburg oligarchs into the party, it could not even mobilise the provincial industrialists. According to Progressist P.A. Buryshkin, the party organisation did not exist outside the Duma, and if the Progressist party played some role in the liberal politics during the war, it was not owing to its strength but to the energetic leadership of the two leaders, Konovalov and Efremov.²⁹

The Duma's Provisional Committee

During the war the liberals had two avenues through which they expressed their opinions: the Duma and the so-called voluntary organisations. Following a one-day session in July 1914, the Duma members met privately under the leadership of Rodzianko, and decided to establish a Provisional Committee for the Relief of the Wounded and Sick Soldiers and War Sufferers. This committee, originally designed for relief work, gradually acquired political significance. During the recess of the Duma it was the only organ of the Duma, 'which, though sanctioned by no law and brought into existence *de facto*, remained the guardian of the interests of the Duma'.³⁰ It is important to remember that during the February Revolution, faced with the prorogation of the Duma and with the revolutionary crisis, the Duma delegates were to follow this precedent by creating a Duma committee. Usually the Provisional Committee met twice a week and discussed a number of current problems, but there soon emerged a demand for convening a long-term session of the Duma. Rodzianko was urged to use his 'right of personal report' to the emperor to present this demand. Henceforth Rodzianko emerged as the spokesman for the Duma and for public opinion.

Voluntary Organisations

Another arena for the liberals' activities was in the voluntary organisations. On 30 July 1914, a congress of zemstvo representatives was held at which the zem-

29 Buryshkin 1954, p. 284; Pearson 1977, pp. 17–18. For the division of the Russian industrialists, see Roosa 1972, pp. 395–417; White 1973, pp. 414–20; Roosa 1973, pp. 420–5; Siegelbaum 1977, pp. 31–48; West 1984, pp. 359–77.

30 Gronsky and Astrov 1929, pp. 28–9.

stvo activists created the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos for the relief of the sick and the wounded. A little later the municipal self-governments followed suit by forming the All Russian Union of Towns. These two voluntary organisations were headed respectively by two liberal activists, Prince G.E. L'vov and M.L. Chelnokov, and were concerned with providing relief for the wounded and the sick, supplying sanitary trains and hospitals, aiding evacuees, combating epidemics, and getting food to the populace. In 1915 the two organisations merged into one, Zemgor.

Despite the practical tasks they set for themselves, patriotism was not the only motive behind the zemstvo and municipal self-government activists' participation in war efforts. Émigré historian George Katkov's indictment of the voluntary organisations as a Trojan horse from which the liberals attempted to take over the entire state machinery may be an exaggeration, but he has a valid point: some activists in the Union of Zemstvos and the Union of Towns clearly sought to make them the instruments of political reform. It is precisely for this reason that the minister of internal affairs, Nikolai Maklakov, had opposed the creation of the voluntary organisations and after their establishment attempted to curtail their activities. When Rodzianko requested permission to hold a meeting of the zemstvo representatives to discuss the supply of boots for the army, Maklakov refused on the grounds that the zemstvos would, under this guise, demand a constitution.³¹ Despite Maklakov's objections and obstructions, however, the Union of Zemstvos and the Union of Towns became deeply involved in war efforts, particularly in food supply. The more deeply involved they became, the more these voluntary organisations depended on government subsidies and direction. From the government's point of view, too, the activities of the voluntary organisations became such an integral part of the war effort that it could no longer ignore them. This mutual dependence, at a time when polarisation between state and society was progressing to an irrevocable point, became the unique characteristic of the relationship between the liberals and the government during the war.

World War I and the Russian Military

The First World War glaringly revealed the schism between the new century into which the world was plunging and the old era from which it was exiting.

31 Katkov, 1967, pp. 3–11; Diakin 1967a, p. 68. See also Gleason 1976, pp. 290–302; Fallows 1978, pp. 70–90; Matsuzato 1998, pp. 321–37; Pichon-Bobrinckoy 2005, pp. 673–98.

It was the first modern war for which the entire industrial resources of a country were mobilised and the economy restructured. It was fought with armaments produced by the most advanced technology available at that time. Tanks, airplanes, poison gas and submarines made their first appearance in warfare. The technological advances in artillery and rifles made traditional military strategy obsolete. When infantry rifles could fire up to fifteen rounds a minute at a range of two miles, a cavalry became useless. Yet tanks were too slow and too vulnerable, so despite severe limitations, armies had to continue to rely on horses for mobile attack.³²

Eventually Russia was knocked out of the war, not because her military technology was inferior to the enemy's, but rather because her socio-political system could not withstand the strain of protracted modern warfare. To paraphrase Norman Stone, her defeat was caused by the conflict between a twentieth-century war and a nineteenth-century body politic. The military themselves were hopelessly divided between supporters and opponents of war minister Sukhmlinov, front commanders and the war ministry, the war ministry and the general staff, northwestern front and southwestern front, and artilleryists and infantry.³³ The Russian army, though equipped with the most advanced armaments, continued to be plagued by its traditional organisational weakness. The Stavka, the general headquarters, was created, but it was powerless to resolve these divisions. Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, the tsar's cousin once removed, was appointed commander in chief, and General N.N. Ianushkevich his chief of staff, but they were merely figureheads and had little influence over the conduct of war.³⁴ The war minister, V.A. Sukhomlinov, under the aegis of the tsar himself, was powerful, but not powerful enough to silence his opponents.

In anticipation of the future war against France and Russia, Germany adopted the Schlieffen Plan, which was designed to avoid a two-frontal war by knocking France out first, before Russia completed the general mobilisation. To counter the Schlieffen Plan, the French general staff adopted Plan XVII, which depended on Russia attacking Germany as soon as Germany mobilised. Although initially the Russian general staff planned to attack Austria-Hungary first, its strategic plan was revised under French pressure. When the war began, Russia attacked the German army in East Prussia before it completed its general mobilisation. According to Richard Pipes, 'The decision to stretch the Russian forces along an overextended front, backed by inadequate reserves, and to push

32 Stone 1975, pp. 45, 50.

33 Ibid., *passim*.

34 For Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, see Kolonitskii 2010, pp. 375–514; Robinson 2014.

them into a premature, poorly planned attack on East Prussia, may well have been one of the costliest Allied blunders of the war'.³⁵

Early in the war the Russians suffered a defeat at Tannenberg – a defeat in which Russian casualties numbered 170,000, and General A. Samsonov, who led the offensive, shot himself.³⁶ At the Galician front, where the Russians faced a less capable enemy, they achieved some success. But at the beginning of 1915, the Russian army began an ill-prepared offensive through the Carpathians toward Hungary under the commander of the south-western front, General N.I. Ivanov.³⁷ As soon as the German counteroffensive led by General August von Mackensen began in April, the Russians suffered defeat after defeat. The Great Retreat had begun. By summer all of Russian Poland, Lithuania, and a part of Belorussia, together with a large industrial region including Warsaw, L'vov, and Vilnius, fell into enemy hands. The defeat on the battlefield gave the Russians a rude awakening and drastically changed the political climate of the nation. The liberals began to criticise the government and the workers showed the first signs of restlessness.³⁸

An acute shortage of ammunition was blamed for the crushing defeat of the Russian army in 1915. That such a shortage existed is undeniable. Sukhomlinov and the Artillery Administration had grossly underestimated the demand for shells and rifles, partly because no one had foreseen that the war would last so long. The Franco-Russian General Staff agreement had assumed that the war would be over in six weeks. But they were wrong not only about the length of the war, but also about the consuming need for shells and rifles in modern warfare. A reserve of seven million shells – a figure based on the expenditures of the Russo-Japanese War – was expected to last the entire war. That amounted to about a thousand rounds per field gun, and as it turned out that was not enough in 1916 to keep a gun going for ten days. It is estimated that the Stavka's minimum demand for shells was five times greater than the production norms of 1914. Sukhomlinov and the Artillery Administration were guilty of making no preparations for mobilising Russian industries to cope with the great demand. They had relied exclusively on the existing state factories, the production capacity of which was absurdly low. In the Sestroretsk Weapons Factory only 4,530 rifles were manufactured in 1913, and shortly before the war began, production had stopped completely. Not until July 1914 was production

35 Pipes 1990, pp. 197–9. For Russia and World War I, see *Posledniaia voina* 2006.

36 For the battle of Tannenberg, see Solzhenitsyn, 1971.

37 General Ivanov was later appointed by Nicholas II to command the expeditionary forces to suppress the revolution in Petrograd during the February Revolution.

38 See Gatrell 1999.

resumed and 19 rifles produced. The Tula Gun Factory, the largest in the empire, manufactured only 16 rifles in seven months of 1914. As a result, in the first year of the war an entire army, or 140,000 soldiers, were left without rifles.³⁹

Yet the shell shortage was merely one aspect of the complex shortcomings of the Russian army. The annihilation of 40,000 officers in 1914, the cream of the officers' corps, contributed to a widening chasm between officers and men. There were not enough personnel to train the new recruits, who arrived at the front ignorant and undisciplined. Officers complained incessantly of the poor quality of the soldiers, 'who held rifles like peasants with a rake'. As a result, unnecessarily harsh measures were imposed on the soldiers. But the officers, fresh from a few weeks' of rushed training, were themselves often incompetent and the soldiers responded with insolence, inertia, and passive resistance. This chasm was to grow wider in the years to follow.⁴⁰

Russia's largest strength was considered to be its manpower. Its standing army of 1,400,000 men before the mobilisation was the largest in the world, exceeding the combined peacetime forces of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Fully mobilised, it could expand to five million soldiers. Nevertheless, closer scrutiny would reveal the weakness of the legendary Russian 'steamroller'. The first to be called up – the group called First Levy – were those at the age of twenty-one, for three years active service, and eight more years in the Second Levy. After this, they were supposed to spend five more years in the National Militia (*Opolchenie*). In the first year of the war, Russia fielded 6.5 million men: 1.4 million on active duty, 4.4 million trained reservists of the First Levy, and 700,000 new recruits. Between January and September 1915, the army called up another 1.4 million reservists of the First Levy. After this Russia had exhausted the trained reservists. What was available was only the Second Levy, the Militia and untrained masses of new recruits. 'To everyone's surprise, in 1916 Russian ran out of manpower for her armed forces'.⁴¹

The Russian soldiers, mostly peasant recruits, were not united by the inner motivation to serve the nation. Modern nations used the military as the vehicle to instil a sense of nationalism and integrate the masses of recruits into a cohesive 'nation', but Russia failed on this score. Peasant-soldiers' first commitment stubbornly remained to their native communities rather than 'Russia'. This explained the high rate of desertion and surrender.⁴² They obeyed orders, but what governed army life was more reminiscent of life under serfdom. Officers

39 Stone 1975, pp. 45, 146; Pipes 1990, p. 206; Sidorov 1973, pp. 11–12.

40 For the relationship between officers and soldiers, see Chapter 8.

41 Pipes 1990, pp. 202–3. See also Sanborn 2003.

42 Pipes 1990, p. 203.

addressed privates using *ty* (thou), as masters addressed serfs under serfdom, an equivalent of 'boy' in the American south, and the soldiers were required to address their officers as 'Your Highness' (*Vashe Prevoskhoditel'stvo*). Soldiers (as well as officers) took an oath to the tsar, not to the nation. One can easily see the inherent danger of the army crumbling when the tsar's authority became eroded.

There was a surge of patriotism at the outbreak of war that hypnotised Russian society, which seemed to have been united behind the tsar. For the common struggle against the external enemy, people seemed to forget and forgive internal discord. But internal peace did not last long. As soon as the Russian army suffered a humiliating defeat, the monster of internal strife, which had been put to rest only temporarily, raised its head. The liberals began to criticise the government. The workers in Petrograd were awakening from their somnolent inertia.

The Political Crisis of Summer 1915

Creation of Special Councils and the War Industries Committees

At the end of May, there occurred violent anti-German pogroms in Moscow. The government let the pogroms rage for three days without taking any measures. This incident touched off outcry from the liberals, causing the first crack in the sacred union.¹ Liberal activism was awakened. This event also coincided with a series of defeats on the battlefields.

The dissatisfaction of the liberals with the government in the spring of 1915 was expressed in three demands: to allow increased participation in the war effort by representatives of society, to reopen the Duma, and to dismiss the unpopular ministers. Faced with a humiliating military defeat, Nicholas was forced to make concessions. He created a special council for national defence in which representatives of society were invited to participate. He also reconvened the Duma in July and dismissed four ministers. But the worsening situation on the battlefield hardened the liberals' stand. In the summer of 1915, those in the Duma and the State Council coalesced into the Progressive Bloc, demanding moderate internal reforms. Adding a third component to the existing voluntary organisations, the disgruntled industrialists formed the War Industries Committees and stepped up their attacks on the government. Despite his initial concessions, Nicholas recoiled, and became suspicious of their demands for political reforms. In the summer of 1915, his differences with the liberals created the first serious political crisis since the outbreak of the war.

The retreat of the Russian army wounded the pride of patriotic Russians, who believed the shell shortage to be the cause of the defeat. In the spring and summer of 1915, the shortage was at its most critical point – reserves were exhausted and new orders failed to arrive. At this point the Russian industrialists took the initiative and began to organise the nation's economy for the war effort. Liberal leaders such as Rodzianko and Guchkov took inspection tours of the front. Sukhomlinov complained: 'Guchkov is basically thrusting his paws into the army ... In my opinion this can create a very dangerous situation for our existing state order'.² Not only did the Stavka take no measures against the visits

1 Lohr 2003, pp. 31–6, 45–6; Gaida 2003, pp. 75–7.

2 Sidorov 1973, p. 56.

of Guchkov and Rodzianko, but it enthusiastically supported Rodzianko's plan to solve the shell shortage. The Octobrists who had close connections with the financial and industrial magnates in Petrograd had discussed the possibility of creating a special council composed of representatives of the war ministry, the Duma, and the industrialists to coordinate and supervise economic activities. In early May, Rodzianko and the supporters of this idea, V.P. Litvinov-Filanskii and two financial magnates, A.I. Vyshnegradskii and A.I. Putilov, petitioned the tsar, urging the creation of such a council. Nicholas accepted their petition and on 14 May the Special Council for Improvement of Artillery Supplies for the Active Army, composed of the chairman and three representatives of the Duma (three Octobrists), representatives from the war ministry, and Vyshnegradskii and Putilov representing private industry, had its first meeting.³ This concession by Nicholas was the beginning of a period of reconciliation.

The industrialists presented a demand at the council meetings for better coordination between the artillery administration and private industry. A major part of the discussion by the council was devoted to drafting a plan for government orders for armaments from private industry. According to A.L. Sidorov, 'this was a major economic and political victory of the bourgeoisie'.⁴ The formation of the special council was also a tactical victory from the government's point of view, because it split the industrialists into two opposing forces and thus weakened the chance of a concerted effort by the industrialists against the government. By allowing the conservative Petrograd industrial magnates to participate in the special council, the government succeeded in preventing them from joining with the liberals in opposition to the government. The Petrograd oligarchs, who were making tremendous profits from government contracts, completely dropped out of the political struggle.

The Kadets refused to participate in the special council on the grounds that Sukhomlinov, a major culprit for creating the shell shortage, headed it.⁵ Instead they prepared a legislative bill for the creation of a centralised body to deal with all war supply matters – a body that was to be under the tighter control of the Duma. In responding to these criticisms, the government countered with an attempt to reorganise the special council. It created four special councils under four different ministries: a special council of defence under the war ministry, a council for transportation under the ministry of transport, a council for food supply under the ministry of agriculture, and a council for fuel under the min-

3 Rodzianko 1973, pp. 130–4.

4 Sidorov 1973, pp. 62–3.

5 Rodzianko 1973, p. 134.

istry of trade and industry. The government made concessions to the liberals by extending the membership on these councils to the representatives of the Duma, industry, the Union of Zemstvos, and the Union of Towns. Nevertheless, the government firmly maintained bureaucratic control over the councils, chaired by the respective ministers, who had veto power.

Creation of the War Industries Committee

The Moscow industrialists and other smaller provincial industrialists had resented that they were initially excluded from the special council created in May. This frustration led them to establish the War Industries Committees to mobilise the smaller industrialists in the war effort. On 26 May, the Ninth Congress of the Representatives of Industry and Trade was held. Its major theme was the 'mobilisation of industry', a slogan advanced by Moscow industrialists and supported by the Kadets and the provincial industrialists. The congress decided to create local committees for the conversion of local industries to war industries. 'To coordinate all work of various localities and groups and to accommodate this work with the activities of the higher governmental agencies', a Central War Industries Committee was created. The Moscow industrialists, who championed the opposition to the Petrograd magnates, succeeded in taking over its leadership and elected Guchkov chairman of the Central War Industries Committee and Konovalov vice-chairman.⁶

Although the Central War Industries Committee played an important role politically by voicing sharp criticism of the government, its economic role was minuscule. It merely served as an intermediary between government agencies and provincial industrialists. Financially, the committees were almost exclusively dependent on state subsidies. Important issues dealing with the organisation of a war economy were determined by the special councils and the Central War Industries Committee was limited to exerting some influence in these councils on behalf of the provincial industrialists. During their first two years, the military orders received by the Central War Industries Committee from government agencies constituted no more than 3 to 5 percent of the total orders. Actual fulfilment of orders amounted to even less. The special councils, therefore, had ample reason to complain about the poor performance of the War Industries Committees. The government, disturbed by the increased involvement of the War Industries Committees in political matters, even considered cutting off government subsidies. The shrill voices of the leaders of the Central War Industries Committee called not for the

6 Diakin 1963a, pp. 91–4; Siegelbaum 1977, pp. 40–1; Pearson 1977, pp. 34–5; Gaida 2003, pp. 73–9.

takeover of the entire function of the state, as Katkov argues, but for concessions from the government.⁷

Dismissals of Unpopular Ministers

As soon as the Russian army began its humiliating retreat, the liberals began looking for scapegoats. They directed their criticism at the ministers hostile to the liberals. In mid-May, during an audience with the tsar, Rodzianko recommended the dismissal of four ministers, Maklakov (minister of internal affairs), I.G. Shcheglovitov (Justice), V.K. Sabler (procurator of the holy synod), and Sukhomlinov (war). At the same time, the liberals demanded the reopening of the Duma, which was suspended since the outbreak of the war except for a three-day session to pass the budget in January 1915. At the end of May the All-Russian Congress of the Representatives of Industry and Trade passed a resolution calling for immediate convocation of the Duma. The Unions of Zemstvos and Towns passed a similar resolution.⁸ The liberal campaign for the convocation of the Duma and the dismissal of unpopular ministers found sympathetic ears even in the government. Seven ministers led by Krivoshein, meeting at the apartment of foreign minister S.D. Sazonov, decided that the Duma should convene as quickly as possible and, to achieve cooperation with the Duma, the four ministers should be dismissed. Goremykin supported this opinion.⁹

On 5 June, Nicholas signed the imperial rescript dismissing Maklakov, who had consistently opposed liberal forces and attempted to block encroachment by society in the affairs of government. Now the liberals directed their attention toward another target, Sukhomlinov. They held this conservative war minister responsible for the catastrophic shell shortage in 1915. But the vicious attacks against Sukhomlinov in the spring of 1915 were politically motivated. The liberals wanted a pound of flesh from the government for the humiliating defeat, and no one was better suited to be that scapegoat than Sukhomlinov, a favourite of the tsar and the tsarina. The liberals' demand was supported by anti-Sukhomlinovites in the army, who were resentful of the army reforms he had carried out – reforms that led to the loss of their political influence in the army. The liberals eagerly accepted the explanation of the anti-Sukhomlinovite generals.

7 Sidorov 1973, pp. 191–212; Stone 1975, pp. 194–211; Katkov 1967, pp. 7–11.

8 Rodzianko 1973, p. 132; Diakin 1967a, p. 75; Miliukov 1978, p. 12.

9 Chermenskii 1976, p. 87; Pearson 1977, p. 41.

In February Sukhomlinov's slipping prestige was dealt a heavy blow by the arrest of his protégé, Colonel S.N. Miasoedov. Suspected of being a German spy, Miasoedov was tried by a military tribunal and executed, although there was actually no evidence to substantiate the charge against him. The affair was a 'judicial murder', carried out by Sukhomlinov's enemies, one of whom was Sukhomlinov's successor, General A.A. Polivanov. The liberals, who had shown great courage for the cause of human rights in the notorious Beilis case, this time lent a hand to the miscarriage of justice. It marked the beginning of a vicious whispering campaign that contributed, with its innuendos and inflated, unsubstantiated charges appealing to the popular imagination, to Sukhomlinov's downfall and eventually to the loss of prestige of the imperial government. The argument went: If Miasoedov was a proven German spy, Sukhomlinov a proven traitor, then what is the empress, a German woman? In popular mind German influence had penetrated deep into the imperial court.¹⁰

In the face of mounting pressure from the liberals, the army generals, and now a majority of his own government, Nicholas regretfully parted with Sukhomlinov, his favourite war minister. 'It is for him much better to avoid a scandal', he confided to his wife.¹¹ On 11 June, unable to tell Sukhomlinov the bad news personally, Nicholas had a letter of dismissal delivered to his home. On the following day, Sabler, a staunch supporter of Rasputin, and Shcheglovitov, one of the organisers of the Beilis case, were fired. Public vindictiveness did not end with Sukhomlinov's dismissal. In 1916 he was arrested, tried on the charge of treason, and found guilty. Sir Edward Grey, British foreign secretary, cryptically remarked to the visiting Duma delegates in England: 'Brave is a government that decides at the time of war to try a war minister for treason'.¹² Sukhomlinov's personal enemy, Polivanov, was appointed the new minister of war, despite the empress's strenuous opposition. The only reactionary minister left in the cabinet was its chairman, Goremykin. The period of reconciliation was in full swing.

10 Stone 1975, pp. 17–43, 197–8; Mel'gunov 1961, pp. 20–9; Katkov 1967, pp. 119–32.

11 Quoted in Diakin 1967a, p. 79.

12 Quoted in Mel'gunov 1961, p. 28. For dismissal of unpopular ministers, see Miliukov 1978, pp. 12–13.

Responsible Ministry or Ministry of Confidence?

Besides dismissing the four ministers, Nicholas made another concession to liberal demands. The Duma was convened on 19 July. The liberals, however, were not united on tactics to be employed at the new sessions. Progressist I.N. Efremov attacked Miliukov and advocated pressure to force Goremykin out.¹³ The split between left and right had become more serious within the Kadet party. The left-wing Kadets criticised Miliukov's leadership and his inaction in the face of the mounting crisis in the country. They insisted on reviving the Kadet legislative plans, which included a demand for the establishment of a 'responsible ministry', namely, one responsible to the Duma. Miliukov strongly opposed such demands. In his opinion, it would be impossible to pursue the war without the cooperation of the government and its continuation should be the foremost task of the Kadets, one to which all other demands should be subordinated. He countered their demand with one for the establishment of a 'ministry of confidence'. The difference was not merely semantic: a 'ministry of confidence' meant the acceptance by the liberals of the bureaucracy with a change of its personnel, a 'responsible ministry' would have meant the replacement of the bureaucracy by the liberals, which would have been possible only through a drastic constitutional change. Vasilii Maklakov stated: 'the slogan of a responsible ministry is at this moment revolutionary'.¹⁴ Miliukov and Maklakov feared that stepping up political demands would contribute to the revival of a mass movement. As early as July there was a sharp increase in strikes. According to Miliukov, 'not to support the government now would mean to play with fire'. In the Kadet conference held on 6 to 8 June, Miliukov's opinion was supported overwhelmingly. Dissatisfied with the leadership, the left-wing Kadets sought mass support by devoting their energy to organising social welfare departments in the cities and the labour exchanges. These organisations became points of contact between the liberal intelligentsia and the representatives of the workers' movement led by the moderate socialists, although the Kadets did not have much success in achieving mass support among the workers.¹⁵

13 Pearson 1973, pp. 42–3.

14 Chermenskii 1976, p. 85; Arkhipov 2000, p. 26; Kulikov 2004, 95–6. For debates about a ministry of confidence and a responsible ministry, see Gaida 2003, pp. 82–101.

15 Quoted in Diakin 1967a, pp. 82–3, 85–6. Miliukov reversed the Kadets' previous policy of nonparticipation in the Special Council for Defence after Sukhomlinov's dismissal. In protest, Nekrasov resigned from the party central committee. Pearson 1977, p. 47. See also Milliukov 1978, p. 13.

The Duma session opened as the military situation worsened. On 24 July Warsaw was taken. Then the fortresses of Brest, Novogeorgievsk, Ossovets, and Kovno fell one after another. On 16 July, the new war minister, General Polivanov, declared that the nation was in danger. This brought two reactions from the liberals. One group, represented by Miliukov, considered that the demand for change required more caution, but the more radical liberals, such as Nekrasov, concluded that it was now time to attack the government more aggressively. Nekrasov suggested to his Kadet colleagues that it was time to be prepared to 'take all power and all responsibility into our hands'. Miliukov, on the other hand, appealed to the government: 'Remove the road block, give the public organisations a way, give the nation internal peace'. Despite the Progressists' insistence on the establishment of a responsible ministry, a majority of the Duma liberals accepted Miliukov's moderate demand: the formation of a ministry of public confidence.¹⁶

Two Issues in the Political Crisis of August 1915

The political crisis in August 1915 involved two issues: Nicholas's decision to assume the supreme commandship and the government's attitude toward the newly formed Progressive Bloc in the Duma. Nicholas's decision to assume the supreme command was prompted by his concept of the duties of the sovereign in time of war, and by the empress's jealousy of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich. Empress Alexandra believed that the grand duke harboured ambitions to replace the emperor and was playing a dangerous game with Duma liberals, a suspicion that the emperor fully shared.¹⁷ Since it was expected that the actual command of the army would not be taken by the emperor, the military leaders were not concerned with the possibility of his meddling in military matters. In fact, the Stavka in Mogilev under the new chief of staff, General M.V. Alekseev, who replaced General Ianushkevich, was a remarkable improvement over Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich's Stavka.¹⁸ There were, however, grave dangers in this decision. Any defeat would taint the prestige of the emperor, who would be responsible as commander-in-chief for milit-

16 Diakin 1967a, p. 96; Miliukov quoted in Chermenskii 1976, pp. 90, 91; Pearson 1977, pp. 47–8; Gaida 2003, 88–101.

17 Kolonitskii 2010, pp. 138–9.

18 Stone 1975, pp. 191–3. For Nicholas's assumption of the supreme commandship and the cabinet members' reaction to his decision, see Pearson 1977, pp. 54–6. See also Ganelin/Florinskii 1997, pp. 10–11, 20–3.

ary strategy. More important, the new task would require Nicholas to stay in Mogilev, thus giving the empress and her friends in the capital more opportunity to meddle in government policies.

It was for these reasons that when Polivanov broke the news of Nicholas's decision on 6 August at the meeting of the Council of Ministers, a majority of the ministers were opposed. During the cabinet meetings from 9 to 11 August various ministers expressed their concerns about the worsening political situation. P.A. Kharitonov (state controller) stated: 'The army and the population are resting their hope, not on us, but on the State Duma and the War Industries Committee'. N.B. Shcherbatov (minister of internal affairs) remarked: 'The government is hanging in the air, having no support from either below or above'. Asked by Goremykin how to combat the revolutionary movement, Shcherbatov replied: 'How do you want me to combat the growing revolutionary movement when I was denied the cooperation of the troops on the grounds that they are unreliable and that it is uncertain to make them shoot at crowds. With police alone it would be impossible to pacify the whole of Russia'. Krivoshein, the most outspoken leader of the ministers who opposed the tsar's assumption of supreme commandship came to the conclusion that the only way out of this political crisis would be to reach a compromise with the Duma.¹⁹

Formation of the Progressive Bloc

On 11 and 12 August the representatives of the Duma and the State Council met together and discussed a common platform to pursue. They decided to form a Progressive Bloc, which comprised two-thirds of the Duma, excluding only those from the extreme right and the left. The programme the Duma liberals agreed upon, according to Michael Hamm, 'offered at least a token for everyone: for peasants, equalization of rights; for workers, restoration of labor union activities and the labor press; for national minorities, an end to repression and exploitation'.²⁰ But to reach a compromise with more conservative elements, the Kadets, the driving force of the Progressive Bloc, had to withdraw their platform: nothing was mentioned about social reforms and nationality questions. The only important point of the Progressive Bloc's programme rested with its demand for the formation of a ministry of confidence. Even here the Kadet

19 Chermenskii 1976, pp. 96, 109; Diakin 1967a, p. 110. For the Council of Ministers' meeting during the political crisis in the summer of 1915, see Iakhontov 1926, pp. 5–136, and the translation, Cherniavsky 1967. See also Pearson 1977 pp. 49–50.

20 Hamm 1974, p. 455.

leadership had to oppose a more radical demand from the left Kadets and the Progressists for the formation of a responsible ministry.

Politically, the Progressive Bloc was characterised more by a willingness to reach a compromise with the government than by hostility toward it. As Miliukov, its foremost leader, stated, the formation of the Progressive Bloc was a 'safety-valve of the drowning monarchy', and 'the last measure to find a peaceful way out of the situation, which was from day to day growing more and more threatening'. Their socialist colleagues in the Duma, who had hoped that the liberals would take a more militant stand against the government, were disappointed. Kerenskii commented: 'We do not judge you, we do not wish to fight with you, and we will calmly wait until you are disillusioned ... and come to us for help'.²¹

In the middle of August, anticipating the reorganisation of the government, the liberal circles were busy formulating lists of cabinet members acceptable for a ministry of confidence. The Progressists' newspaper in Moscow, *Utro Rossii*, published on 13 August a list of prospective ministers consisting of Rodzianko (premier), Guchkov (internal affairs), Miliukov (foreign affairs), Shingarev (finance), Nekrasov (transport), Konovalov (trade and industry), Krivoshein (agriculture), Polivanov (war), Savich (navy), Efremov (state comptroller), Ignat'ev (education), and V. L'vov (procurator of the holy synod).²² In contrast, the Kadets favoured a government headed by Prince G.E. L'vov. One should not take these busily circulated rumours as evidence of efforts by the liberals to take over power from the government. Such an ambition was far

21 Quoted in Riha 1969, p. 227. For the programme of the Progressive Bloc, see also Pearson 1977, p. 51; Arkhipov 2000, pp. 28–9; Miliukov 1978, p. 13; Gaida 2003, 101–8, 132–5.

22 Chermenskii 1976, p. 98; Gaida 2003, p. 109. This list reflects the Progressists' thinking. Chermenskii gives three other lists, which he discovered in Nicholas II's archives. According to this, the Kadets favoured the following lists: G.E. L'vov (chairman), G.E. L'vov (internal affairs), Miliukov (foreign affairs), Polivanov (war), Savich (navy), Maklakov (justice), Ignat'ev (education), V.N. L'vov (procurator of the holy synod), Konovalov (trade and industry), Dobrovol'skii (transport), and Pokrovskii (finance). The Octobrists' candidates consisted of the following: Guchkov (chairman), G.E. L'vov (internal affairs), Sazonov (foreign affairs), L'vov (procurator of holy synod), Konovalov (trade and industry), Nemeshev (transport), and Shingarev (finance). The members of the Progressive Bloc in the State Council favoured the following list: Shcherbatov (chairman), V.I. Gurko (internal affairs), Miliukov (foreign affairs), Polivanov (war), Manukhin (justice), Ignat'ev (education), V.N. L'vov (procurator of holy synod), Konovalov (trade and industry), Nemeshev (transport), and Shingarev (finance). These differences indicate that there was little agreement among the members of the Progressive Bloc on who should be the members of a ministry of confidence.

from being the goal of the liberal politicians in August 1915. Miliukov stated: 'We do not seek power now ... It is now only necessary to change the head of the government with a wise bureaucrat'. According to Vasili Maklakov, the government could not be formed by the liberals alone, 'because we don't know anything about the governmental matters. We don't know the techniques. And we don't have time to learn now'.²³

The cabinet was split on the two issues – the decision of Nicholas to assume the supreme command and the attitude toward the Progressive Bloc.²⁴ In the background of the political crisis was the spectre of the rapidly growing workers' movement in Petrograd. Finally awoken from dormancy, the workers in Petrograd rose in August, in the first large political strike since the outbreak of war, to protest the killing of workers in Ivanovo-Voznesensk.²⁵

Nicholas Prorogues the Duma

It seemed imperative for the majority of ministers to seek a compromise with the Duma liberals to avoid a crisis. Nicholas's assumption of the supreme command and his rejection of a compromise with the Progressive Bloc, they feared, would drive the liberals to the side of revolution against the government. To Nicholas and his loyal servant Goremykin, the principle of autocracy should be all the more uncompromisingly upheld in the face of the mounting pressure, whether it came from the workers' strike movement or from the Progressive Bloc in the Duma.

The majority of the cabinet members wanted to petition Nicholas not to assume command, but Goremykin emphatically rejected the majority opinion, declaring that he would rather resign than join such a mutiny. Finally, the majority went ahead without Goremykin and composed a joint statement to the tsar. Signed by eight of the thirteen members of the cabinet, the letter recommended Goremykin's dismissal and concluded: 'We venture once more to tell you that to the best of our judgment your decision threatens with serious consequences Russia, your dynasty, and your person'.²⁶ They favoured

23 Shul'gin 1925, p. 147; Arkhipov 2000, p. 30. For heated discussion among the liberals who met at Konovalov's villa in Moscow on 16 August 1915, see Gaida 2003, pp. 111–12.

24 For the formation of the Progressive Bloc and the government's reaction, see Kulikov 2004, pp. 83–96; Gaida 2003, pp. 115–28.

25 See Chapter 5.

26 Quoted in Pares 1939 (1961), p. 276. Also see Pearson 1977, p. 56; Kulikov 2004, 89–92. Polivanov and Grigorovich did not sign the petition because of their special obligations of

a compromise with the Progressive Bloc, but on this issue as well they met Goremykin's opposition.

To split the fragile Progressive Bloc, Goremykin invited the representatives of its conservative wing to a meeting and asked them to form a conservative bloc. But they refused. V.V. Shul'gin, one of the deputies invited to this meeting, added insult to injury by unceremoniously recommending his host's resignation instead. Stung by this insolence, Goremykin now strongly favoured prorogation of the Duma. Meanwhile, ignoring him, other ministers decided to negotiate with the Progressive Bloc. On 28 August, the Council of Ministers, after a preliminary talk with the Progressive Bloc, decided with a majority against Goremykin to recommend to the tsar that the present cabinet be replaced by one enjoying the trust and confidence of the Duma. Kharitonov explained: 'We serve not only the tsar but also Russia'. To this Goremykin answered: 'In my view the two are inseparable. Here is the root of our disagreement'.²⁷ Goremykin immediately left for the Stavka, not to inform the tsar of the majority opinion of the Council of Ministers but to privately recommend immediate prorogation of the Duma and dismissal of the disloyal ministers.

The mood of the Progressive Bloc remained optimistic. The Duma was united and enjoyed the support of a large sector of the State Council. The Bloc's demands were modest and accepted by the majority of the cabinet ministers. As Pearson states, 'It did not seem possible for the Bloc to be refused when so many factors were in its favour'.²⁸

Nicholas II Assumes Supreme Commandership

Nicholas's assumption of the supreme command demonstrated his determination to prevent further erosion of the principles of autocracy. When he reluctantly dismissed Nikolai Maklakov, the latter had warned him that the slightest concession to the liberals would open the floodgate to further demands. Now this warning seemed to be borne out. He agreed to let the representatives of the public organisations participate in the special councils, dismissed, though reluctantly, the unpopular ministers, and opened the Duma. Despite

military service to the emperor, although they fully supported the statement. The minister of transport, S.V. Rukhlov, was ill at that time, but he also supported the letter. Thus, only two members of the cabinet, Goremykin and Khvostov, opposed the joint statement.

27 Shidlovskii 1923, vol. 2, pp. 37–40; Chermenskii 1976, pp. 117–18; Diakin 1967a, p. 115; Pearson 1977, pp. 53–4; Milliukov 1978, pp. 13–14; Kulikov 2004, 91–2; Gaida 2003, p. 119.

28 Pearson 1977, p. 57.

all these concessions, it appeared that the liberals' voice against the government was growing louder. Even worse, his own ministers were now raising criticisms. On 22 August, in the opening ceremony of the special councils in the Winter Palace, Nicholas stated: 'I needed the Duma for securing defense. Now all the programs have been accomplished. The rest will be done by Article 87'.²⁹

On the following day, the same day that the ministers dispatched their collective petition to the tsar, he left for Mogilev to assume supreme command. Two factors contributed to Nicholas's hardening attitude toward the liberal opposition. First, Alekseev, the new chief of staff, had succeeded in getting the last Russian troops out of the 'Polish pocket'. The Great Retreat was over. The supply of shells and artillery was increasing. With the improved military situation, Nicholas could afford to ignore internal criticism. Second, liberal criticism of the government invited a backlash from the right wing. On 20 and 22 August the Council of the United Nobility held its meeting. A.N. Naumov, future minister of agriculture, expressed his dissatisfaction with the government's permissiveness in allowing the liberal elements to influence policy. Its chairman, A.P. Strukov, wrote a letter to Goremykin on 23 August, warning that concessions to liberal demands would endanger the existing state order.³⁰ The change in the military position, the support from the conservative nobility, and the rising strike movement all led Nicholas to conclude that it was time to stop any nonsense about flirting with the liberals.

Goremykin returned to Petrograd on 2 September and informed his colleagues of the tsar's decision: to prorogue the Duma immediately for an indefinite time, and to refuse the collective resignation of the ministers. The ministers exploded. Polivanov warned that the prorogation of the Duma would be the beginning of a general strike. But Goremykin reminded him that the workers' movement had developed independently of the relationship between the government and the Progressive Bloc. Sazonov shouted: 'Tomorrow blood will flow in the streets and Russia will plunge into an abyss'. To this, Goremykin replied: 'The Duma will be prorogued on the appointed date, and no blood will flow anywhere'. The chance for reconciliation between the government and the liberals was lost forever. Miliukov's biographer, Thomas Riha, concludes:

The monarchy's last chance for survival had been missed in 1915, when discussion was still possible. Once the people began to make their

29 Chermenskii 1976, p. 111; Kulikov 2004, p. 90.

30 Chermenskii 1976, pp. 114–15; Diakin 1967a, p. 117; Kulikov 2004, pp. 132–3.

demands in the streets, it was too late to rely on the Bloc, which had been the tool of evolution, not of revolution.³¹

If Goremykin's opponents in the cabinet proved to be right in the long run, the strategy of Nicholas and Goremykin had immediate success. The liberals swallowed the humiliation of the prorogation of the Duma in silence. The Progressists' proposal for a boycott of the special councils was rejected by other parties, and the Progressists themselves in the end decided to stay on. Behind their inaction was fear of a mass movement. The liberals wished to avoid any action that might ignite a fire among the masses. Maklakov stated: 'If Russia went on strike, the government would perhaps yield, but I would not want such a victory'. Even Nekrasov spoke of the necessity to stick to the parliamentary method of struggle. The Duma spent the last day of its session on 3 September in a business-like manner without a murmur of protest. 'The Bloc went into voluntary liquidation', Pearson states, 'until the morale of its members recovered from the brutal shock of rejection of its campaign'.³²

On 7 to 9 September in Moscow the congresses of the Unions of Zemstvos and of Towns discussed the strategy of how to react to the government's action. In the Union of Towns the left-wing representatives introduced a resolution calling for a series of internal reforms, the convocation of the Duma, and the establishment of a responsible ministry, but this resolution was defeated by an overwhelming majority. Guchkov declared that he was afraid of 'energetic words' in addressing the government, since 'they might have a destructive influence on the masses'. In the end, the congresses of the two unions decided to send a delegation for the establishment of a ministry of confidence and the convocation of the Duma. According to Guchkov, the congresses adopted the idea of a delegation, 'not for a revolution, but for the very reason of strengthening the government and for the purpose of defending the fatherland from revolution and anarchy'. When the delegation, which included such liberal activists as Prince L'vov, Chelnokov, and Riabushinskii, made a formal request to be received by the emperor, Nicholas refused to meet them, coldly remarking: 'I, of course, will not receive such self-proclaimed plenipotentiaries'.³³

31 Chermenskii 1976, p. 133; Diakin 1967a, p. 118; Cherniavskii 1969, pp. 226–43; Riha 1969, p. 235; Kulikov 2004, pp. 96–7.

32 Chermenskii 1976, p. 120; Progressivnyi blok 1932, p. 155; Diakin 1967a, pp. 119, 121; and Pearson 1977, pp. 58–9. For Nekrasov's continuing radicalism, see Gaida 2003, p. 130.

33 Diakin 1967a, pp. 121–2, 125; Chermenskii 1976, pp. 125, 127, 130; Pearson 1977, pp. 60–1; Gaida 2003, pp. 130–2.

Dismissals of Popular Ministers

In the beginning of September, Alexandra bombarded Nicholas with her appeals to dismiss the ministers who had dared to defy the emperor's will. To resolve the hopeless division within the cabinet, Nicholas called a Council of Ministers meeting at the Stavka for 16 September. The proposed meeting disturbed the empress, who feared that her husband might change his mind. She instructed him to have a preliminary meeting with Goremykin. Just prior to the meeting she sent another telegram, in which she implored her husband: 'Don't forget before the meeting of the ministers to hold the icon in your hand and to comb your hair a few times with His [Rasputin's] comb'.³⁴ The icon and Rasputin's comb must have done the trick, since during the meeting Nicholas maintained uncharacteristic forcefulness. The 'rebel' ministers were not even invited to the customary dinner with the tsar. The hungry ministers had to grab something to fill their empty stomachs at the buffet at the Mogilev railway station. At the meeting Nicholas began his speech by expressing disappointment with the conduct of the majority of the ministers during the August crisis:

You prophesied an ill omen if I assumed the command of the army, but only good came of it. You believed that there would be a revolution if the Duma was prorogued, but nothing of the sort happened. How can I believe you after such an incorrect understanding of the present moment?³⁵

On 26 September Shcherbatov and A.D. Samarin (procurator of the holy synod) received a pink slip. This was followed by the dismissal of the leader of the 'liberal' ministers, Krivoshein, who was considered to be the most likely candidate to head a ministry of confidence. Thus began the 'ministerial leapfrog' – perennial dismissals and appointments of ministers. To top it all, on 27 September, Rasputin, who had been banished from the capital, was allowed to return to Petrograd.³⁶

The political crisis in the summer of 1915 demonstrated the fundamental powerlessness of the Russian liberals. This was expressed in a satirical fable by Vasilii Maklakov, 'A Tragic Situation', that appeared in *Russkie vedomosti* in September.³⁷ In this fable Maklakov pictures an imaginary situation in which a

34 Quoted in Diakin 1967a, p. 125.

35 Chermenskii 1976, p. 131; Pearson 1977, p. 59; Kulikov 2004, p. 98.

36 Miliukov 1978, p. 14; Kulikov 2004, pp. 99–100.

37 Maklakov, 'Tragicheskoe polozenie', *Russkie vedomosti*, 27 September 1915.

mad chauffeur is driving a car down a steep hill at an uncontrollable speed. The passengers know that he is driving everyone to inevitable doom. But no one can grab the steering wheel, because one false move will surely send the car into the abyss. The driver knows this and mocks the anxiety and helplessness of the passengers: 'You will not dare touch me', Maklakov continues:

He is right. You will not dare touch him, for even if you might risk your own life, you are traveling with your mother, and you will not dare endanger your life for fear she too might be killed ... So you will leave the steering wheel in the hands of the chauffeur. Moreover, you will try not to hinder him – you will even help him with advice, warning, and assistance. And you will be right, for this is what has to be done.³⁸

Maklakov's fable explains the dilemma of the liberals during the war except for one factor: he failed to include the workers, and without them the picture of wartime politics – the relationship between the mad chauffeur (the tsar) and the passengers (the liberals) and mother (Russia) rushing together down a steep, winding road (the war) – is not complete. The car also contains a time bomb (the mass movement) that might explode at any moment. Neither the chauffeur nor the passengers can control the bomb, and the passengers are as afraid to move for fear of exploding the bomb as they are in fear of the chauffeur's mad driving. After the crisis of the summer of 1915, the government and the liberal opposition drifted apart. Nicholas II's unyielding, unwise policies frustrated and angered the liberals. But never once did they lift a finger against the emperor and his government. They sat in the passenger seat, frozen and helpless.

38 Quoted in Katkov 1967, pp. 178–9; Grave 1927, p. 65; Gaida 2003, p. 161.

Deepening Gulf: The Government and the Liberals, 1916

Ministerial Leapfrogging and the Liberals

After the political crisis in the summer of 1915, the relationship between the government and the liberals was like a bad marriage. Reconciliation was no longer possible, and as time went on, their mutual distrust grew stronger and their communication more acrimonious. But neither side wanted to make a clean break. The government continued to ignore the liberals' demands, but it stopped short of declaring total war on them. The liberals were outraged by its senseless policy, but they never once raised a hand against the government. However sour and rancorous their relationship had become, the war and the fear of a revolution from below kept their marriage together.

This relationship after the summer of 1915 can be conveniently divided into three successive periods by the tenures of the three ministers of internal affairs: A.N. Khvostov, B.V. Stürmer, and A.D. Protopopov.¹ Each period was marked by the progressive deterioration of the integrity of the government and the increased influence of the court camarilla represented by Rasputin and Alexandra. This deterioration manifested itself in 'ministerial leapfrog'. During the eighteen months from September 1915 to February 1917, Russia had four prime ministers, five ministers of internal affairs, three ministers of foreign affairs, three ministers of war, three ministers of transport, and four ministers of agriculture – an extremely high turnover in vital posts of a government engaged in a fateful war. The military situation improved remarkably in 1916, but signs of strain were appearing in the nation's economy, particularly in the food supply. The economic crisis immediately invited a social dislocation. The workers' strike movement, temporarily stopped by the war, began to surface again, and the threat of a large-scale civil disturbance loomed.

¹ A.N. Khvostov (26 September 1915–3 March 1916), Stürmer (3 March–9 July 1916), and Protopopov (16 September 1916–27 February 1917). A.A. Khvostov briefly assumed the post from 9 July to 16 September 1916, but for the sake of convenience, I have treated this period as a part of the Stürmer period, since Stürmer continued to dominate the political scene as chairman of the Council of Ministers.

After the failure of the Progressive Bloc to reach a compromise with the government, the liberals receded into inaction. Their movement, once united around the Progressive Bloc, splintered in many directions. The most conservative industrialists detached themselves completely from the liberal movement, preferring to make a separate deal with the government. The Progressive Bloc pursued a cautious, even timid, policy of moderation under Miliukov's leadership and refrained from sharply attacking the government. Dissatisfied, the left openly sought ways to influence the masses. One of the policies designed for this purpose was the creation of the Workers' Group under the War Industries Committees. But the flirtation with the labour movement backfired, further alienating the industrialists from the liberals. It was only in the autumn of 1916, when the supply of food reached a serious situation and labour unrest had recovered its pre-war vitality, that the liberals slowly began to raise their voices against the government. Nonetheless, their attacks, sharp as they were, remained verbal. By the end of 1916 the liberals had lost hope and they saw no way out of the stalemate. Nevertheless, sensing the approaching explosion from below, they began preparing themselves for it. They sat motionless for fear that any move might ignite a conflagration, but if that were to come, they were going to move fast to take the reins of government from the old regime.

Khvostov and the Progressive Bloc

The first to take Maklakov's place as minister of internal affairs was A.N. Khvostov, nephew of the minister of justice, A.A. Khvostov. Unlike his conservative but forthright uncle, he was somewhat of a scoundrel and had been elevated to the new post through his connections with V.N. Voeikov, the tsar's palace commandant, Rasputin, and Anna Vyrubova. The new minister of internal affairs stated that politics was a matter of 'stomachs', and regarded the solution of the problem of the high cost of living as the first of his priorities. His proposed solutions were to concentrate all economic power in the hands of the ministry of internal affairs and to form a consumers' union based on reactionary patriotic organisations. The first measure created even more chaos in the food supply mechanism, and the only tangible result of the second measure was an alarming increase in pogroms against the Jewish population. Hostile to the liberals, Khvostov engineered the postponement of the Duma session scheduled for November and banned the congress of the Union of Zemstvos and Towns. He declared: 'The demand for a ministry enjoying public confidence is tantamount to interference in the monarch's prerogatives'. He made preparations for the election of the Fifth Duma, and wrote the 'Khvostov

Memorandum', which was designed to exclude all parties left of the Zemstvist-Octobrists from the next election.²

The liberals, still in a depression from the events of the summer of 1915, were unable to react effectively to Khvostov's attacks. N.I. Astrov, Kadet, stated: 'We have reached the fateful border, beyond which there is no path for constitutional society. We will not be able to become revolutionaries'. The bureau of the Progressive Bloc did not meet at all until October. At the end of October, Miliukov called together the leaders of the Progressive Bloc and the voluntary organisations. But the meeting only revealed the internal divisions of liberal circles. The right wing of the Bloc from the State Council threatened to withdraw if radical political activities were accelerated, while the left wing led by the Progressists insisted on an active campaign against the government. On 23 November 1915, the government postponed the Duma session. Miliukov and the Progressive leadership decided to stage only a mild protest. This decision immediately led to the formal withdrawal of the State Council delegates from the Progressive Bloc. 'Far from purging the Bloc of its least reliable elements', Pearson states, 'this defection only impressed more deeply upon the Bloc's remaining adherents the fragility of the coalition'. Rather than seeking a more active stand, it 'shocked the Bloc back into nonactivity'.³

Such inaction dissatisfied the left-wing liberals. In November, the Progressists led by Efremov proposed to the other members of the Bloc that they boycott the special councils. Their proposal was rejected, and the Progressists unilaterally withdrew from the special councils, although some of their representatives continued to participate as leaders of the War Industries Committees. Efremov's militant line was, however, eminently unpopular even among the Progressists. The industrialist members of the party, fearing government reprisals in military contracts, switched their party affiliations to the Kadets.⁴

A more important split was taking place among the Kadets. The radical rank and file and provincial members of the party had insisted on the need to extend their influence to the masses of workers, fearing that otherwise the workers' movement would destroy not only the government but also the society. For this reason they groped for a way to make an alliance with moderate socialists. In August 1915, an Okhrana agent reported that the labour exchange (a sort of

2 Riha 1969, p. 238; Pearson 1977, p. 66; Gaida 2003, pp. 159–60. For the different interpretation on Khvostov as a dualist, attempting to bridge between the government and the liberals, see Kulkov 2004, pp. 101–4. Kulikov rejects the 'myth' of Rasputin's influence on Nicholas. Kulkov 2004, p. 100.

3 Diakin 1967a, pp. 128–39, 140–3, Pearson 1977, p. 70.

4 Pearson 1977, p. 73.

unemployment office) in Petrograd was becoming a point of contact between the workers' movement and the liberals. By August, various labour exchange offices in Petrograd had created a single central organ, with the purpose of uniting the working class into one organised force. The ideological leaders of the new movement were A.A. Isaev (Kadet), Shapirovich (Menshevik), and Zagorskii and Ermalaev (Socialist Revolutionaries). The leaders of the labour exchange even discussed the possibility of creating a militia and a provisional government in case the government decided to evacuate the capital.⁵

In the autumn, in direct contrast to the inaction of their leaders, their radicalism grew even stronger. After the Progressive Bloc's failure to wring a concession from the government, the left-wing Kadets continued to move leftward, attempting to establish contact with the workers. In October 1915, these Kadets provided the main force behind the movement to create a residents' committee in each city district in Petrograd. Initially, the idea was proposed as a solution for the crisis in the food supply but the proponents clearly envisioned this body as more than a food supply committee. According to the plan, the city's economic and police functions would be transferred to these local self-governments, democratically elected by residents and representing such municipal agencies as the social welfare agencies, labour exchanges, and the city duma, as well as such workers' groups as workers' cooperatives, sick-fund organisations, and trade unions. These committees were to secure food for the people in each district, to be empowered to regulate commercial activities, and to provide each district with a militia to maintain peace. The left-wing Kadets, supported by the Mensheviks, pushed for this plan in the city duma. Two Kadets, Andronikov and Izmailov, boldly declared that they were willing to 'take power from those who could not keep it'. The Okhrana agent stressed that this campaign was 'undertaken with the purpose of organizing wide circles of the population and the city self-government for seizure and concentration of power in their hands'.⁶ Eventually the city duma rejected this idea, but it is significant that as early as the autumn of 1915 the left-wing liberals were thinking of alternatives to the tsarist state organ. Astrov admitted: 'We are late. We must hurry. The question of replacing the dynasty is being raised in the country. We must decide whether we will participate in this'.⁷

5 Report of the chief of the Okhrana to the director of the police department, 22 August 1915, RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1058, ll. 50–5.

6 Report of the chief of the Okhrana to the director of the police department, 9 October 1915, RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1059, ll. 35–9. Also see Diakin 1967a, p. 153; Pearson 1977, pp. 67–8; Gaida 2003, pp. 156–7.

7 Quoted in Gaida 2003, p. 157.

The War Industries Committee and the Workers' Group

The leaders of the Central War Industries Committee also attempted to organise labour by creating the Workers' Group under the War Industries Committee. This attempt was most vigorously pursued by Konovalov, who feared that unless the workers' movement was organised by moderate leaders, its explosion would wipe out the fragile bases of the Russian capitalist system. 'On the next day after the war a bloody internal war will begin among us', Konovalov warned, 'We have nothing to hope for in the government; and we will be confronted, face to face, with the workers ... Wouldn't it be better in such a case to take a path of agreement, a path of sensible concessions from both sides?' Guchkov, who had shifted his position from the staunch supporter of the 'sacred union' to the advocate of radical action by the liberals, enthusiastically supported his proposal. The Central War Industries Committee organised the election campaign for the Workers' Group in August and September in various factories in Petrograd and other cities. As we will see in Chapter 5, the elections of the Workers' Group split the socialists, but in the end, the moderate Mensheviks managed to win the election, forming the Workers' Group within the Central War Industries Committee.⁸

The formation of the Workers' Group, however, did not lead to the reconciliation of labour and capital, as the leaders of the Central War Industries Committee had wished. Two factors worked against it. First, even the moderate leaders of the workers' movement felt that there had been no cessation of a class war. A majority of the Mensheviks who formed the Workers' Group were motivated by their desire to establish a legal channel through which to defend the interests of the working class. They represented constituents who were becoming more radical in the face of worsening economic conditions. Second, the majority of the industrialists did not support the creation of the Workers' Group, considering the flirtation of the War Industries Committee with the working class threatening to their class interests. Konovalov's proposals for legalising trade unions, creating conciliation boards to solve labour disputes, reinstituting the system of factory elders, creating a labour exchange, and regulating labour wages outraged the industrialists. A member of the Workers' Group, G.E. Breido, denounced the industrialists: 'As soon as we approach a question concerning your pocket, you shout: Watch out!'⁹

8 Grave 1927, p. 140; Gaida 2003, pp. 167–8. See Chapter 5.

9 Diakin 1967a, p. 175; also see Arkhipov 2000, pp. 33–6.

Stürmer's 'Dictatorship' and the Liberal Reaction

Stürmer's Appointment and the Liberals' Reaction

The era of Khvostov came to a quick end, not because of liberal criticism but because of the power struggle within the ruling circles. Khvostov had dreamed of replacing Goremykin as chairman of the Council of Ministers, as Goremykin's high-handed opposition to the Duma began to worry the tsar.¹⁰ But Rasputin, who was once Khvostov's benefactor, was in the way of his ambition. To get rid of this obstacle, Khvostov engineered a seamy intrigue that involved his hired agent in a plot to assassinate the 'holy man'. Rasputin became suspicious of Khvostov, and the Rasputin clique both at the court and within the cabinet turned against him. When Nicholas finally dismissed Goremykin in February, it was not Khvostov, but his enemy, B.V. Stürmer, who took over the vacant post. The new head of the cabinet was closely associated with Rasputin and strongly supported by Alexandra. The police chief, S.P. Beletskii, a key figure in Khvostov's assassination plot, betrayed his master, and the entire plot became known to the Rasputin clique and eventually to the public. Khvostov was dismissed in disgrace, and Stürmer took over the ministry of internal affairs as well, as recommended by Rasputin. The sordid scandal further contributed to the erosion of authority of the tsarist government.

Stürmer's appointment as chairman of the Council of Ministers on the eve of the convocation of the Duma was meant to appease the liberal opposition, since unlike Goremykin, Stürmer advocated cooperation with the Duma. Nicholas feared that the retention of Goremykin, who had proposed to postpone the scheduled Duma session, might provoke a stormy protest from the liberals. On 9 February, when the Duma opened, to the pleasant surprise of the liberals, Nicholas made an extraordinary gesture of good will by appearing personally at the Duma. A few meaningless words uttered by the emperor were enough to soften the tone of the speeches of the Duma liberals and to raise hopes that this conciliatory gesture would be followed by further concessions.¹¹

But Stürmer's declaration immediately dampened these hopes, for it was a repetition of the government's refusal to make internal reforms as long as the war continued. Confused and disappointed, the liberals did not know how to act. In the summer of 1915 the defeat of the army had driven them to action, but in the winter of 1916 the military situation was stabilised. Many industrialists and other liberal supporters had defected from political action,

10 For the differences between Nicholas and Goremykin, see Pearson 1977, pp. 75–6.

11 Gaida 2003, p. 186.

and the right-wing members of the Progressive Bloc wondered aloud if their policy in the summer of 1915 might have been a mistake. Miliukov noted in his Duma speech:

I know where the exit is, but I do not know how to get there. We have no means for solving this question by our own forces, and we are no longer prepared to appeal to the wisdom of the government's power.¹²

During the relatively long session, which lasted from 9 February to 20 June, the Duma accomplished little. Whenever it discussed internal reforms, it revealed irreconcilable differences within the Progressive Bloc. Miliukov was absent in the latter part of the Duma session, since he elected to join the Duma deputation to Western Europe, despite the opposition of the Kadet Central Committee. A Menshevik Duma deputy, A.I. Chkhenkeli, remarked: 'The Progressive Bloc is dead. Long live the regressive Bloc'.¹³

The right-wing swing of the Progressive Bloc, however, did not prevent the conservative industrialists from deserting the liberal cause. The industrial magnates in the metallurgical industry formed the Council of Metal Factory Owners. In March the bankers followed suit, forming the Congress of Bankers. These organisations took a critical view of the War Industries Committees and the Progressive Bloc, disassociating themselves from the liberal opposition. The chairman of both organisations was A.D. Protopopov, an Octobrist and vice-chairman of the Duma, who became the spokesman of the conservative industrial and financial oligarchs.¹⁴

Sensing the disarray of the liberal opposition, the court camarilla took vengeance on the 'rebel' ministers who had dared to show sympathy with the liberals in the summer of 1915. In March, Polivanov fell victim to a vicious campaign spearheaded by Alexandra. In July Sazonov was dismissed.¹⁵ Stürmer took over the foreign ministry, conceding the ministry of internal affairs to A.A. Khvostov (not to be confused with his scandalous nephew). As the court camarilla's influence mounted, the rumours of 'German influence' and 'dark forces' became rampant that insinuated that these forces had infiltrated into the court, and engaged in treasonous intrigues to bring the country to defeat. These rumours,

¹² Diakin 1967a, pp. 163–70; Arkhipov 2000, pp. 37–8.

¹³ Hamm 1974, p. 455. According to Gaida, it was Skobelev who made this speech. Gaida 2003, p. 200.

¹⁴ Diakin 1967a, p. 187.

¹⁵ Kulikov 2004, pp. 235, 246–8.

mostly groundless, were nonetheless beginning to have important influence on public opinion, eroding the authority of the emperor and his government.¹⁶

Guchkov's Letter to Alekseev Brings Public Excitement

In addition to Sazonov's dismissal, the other news that brought some excitement among the liberals in the summer of 1916 was Guchkov's famous letter to General Alekseev, chief of staff. In this letter Guchkov characterised the state of government as complete bankruptcy. In his opinion, the liberals were totally powerless to do anything about the situation, and went on to state:

Our methods of struggle are double-edged, and under the rising temper of the masses, particularly of the working masses, they could become the first spark to ignite a fire, the dimensions of which no one can predict or localize. I am no longer talking about what will wait for us after the war; a deluge is coming – but the pitiful, rotten, slushy power is preparing to meet this cataclysm with the same methods that have defended itself from good pouring rain: wearing galoshes and covering itself with umbrella.

Guchkov hoped that Alekseev would recognise that in the face of the powerlessness of the liberals, the military would be the only force viable enough to exert influence on the tsar. Whatever Guchkov's intention was, the wide circulation of the letter embarrassed Alekseev, who was questioned by Nicholas about his correspondence with the 'known enemy of the monarchy'. The contents of Guchkov's letter were certainly not sensational and if it became much talked about among the liberals, it was, as Diakin states, because the liberals had very little to talk about that summer.¹⁷

Whether or not Guchkov's letter had any effect on the military leaders, the latter were becoming increasingly concerned with the internal political situation, which was beginning to affect the morale of the soldiers in the trenches and the barracks. There is evidence that some of the military leaders had espoused the notion, even suggesting it to the tsar, that a ministry of confidence should be formed to reunify the nation in the war effort. On 15 June, Alekseev recommended to Nicholas the establishment of a dictatorship to solve the nation's economic problems. This recommendation reflected the

16 See Arkhipov 2000, pp. 38–56; Kolonitskii 2010, pp. 228–40, 289–313.

17 Semennikov 1927, p. 282; Katkov 1967, pp. 183–6; Diakin 1967a, p. 15; Arkhipov 2000, p. 60; Kulikov 2004, pp. 207, 210. Katkov interprets Guchkov's letter as one of his conspiratorial manoeuvres to involve the military against the monarchy.

military's growing concern with the deterioration of the system of food supply, which had become worse in the cities and was also beginning to affect the provisions of the army.¹⁸

The Government and the Food Supply Question

Russia, like most other countries, was not prepared for the war's profound impact on the national economy. As it continued, the economic structure had to be adjusted to the war effort, and each economic readjustment was accompanied by social and political implications. We have seen the readjustments made in the war industries and the political realignments that accompanied them. Equally important was the economic readjustment brought about by the food supply problem – a matter that vitally affected all segments of society: the government, which assumed the ultimate responsibility for feeding the army and the population; the army, which depended upon the government's ability to procure food for the army and the navy; the liberals' voluntary organisations and self-governments, which were drawn into the food supply mechanism; the peasants, the providers; and the urban population, the consumers. At the outset, it must be said that, considering that foreign trade was virtually stopped and economic patterns were significantly changed by the war, the tsarist government's overall performance in handling this enormous task of food supply was not as bad as is often argued. The mechanism the government created, despite important shortcomings, on the whole worked not so poorly under difficult conditions. After all, the army did not suffer from lack of provisions, and no one in the cities starved. The collapse of the mechanism for supplying food actually came after the February Revolution.

The central coordinating body of all food supply matters was the Special Council for Food Supply, created in August 1915 and headed by the minister of agriculture. The special council involved in its supply network not only representatives of the bureaucracy – from the ministries of agriculture, finance, internal affairs, state bank, etc. – but also those from zemstvos, city dumas, and other nongovernmental agrarian and financial organisations from society. In fact, cooperation between bureaucracy and society was one of the most striking features of this special council. An overwhelming majority of the food com-

18 In General N.I. Ivanov's archives there is one document concerning the imperial rescript to grant a ministry of confidence dated sometime in the summer of 1916. Proval popytki 1962, p. 104; Semennikov 1927, pp. 259–66.

missioners at the provincial and district levels were persons who represented society, especially those from *zemstvos*.¹⁹ To be sure, there were some tensions. After the autumn of 1916, the relationship between the government and the liberals became extremely strained, and the liberals often used the council network as a forum for their political offensive against the government. But on the whole, bureaucracy and society worked well together on a practical level. The special council also had the good fortune to be headed by competent ministers of agriculture: Krivoshein, A.N. Naumov, A.A. Bobrinskii, and A.A. Rittikh. These men successfully maintained the basic framework of the supply network, and staved off the ever present intervention of other bureaucratic agencies, particularly from the ministry of internal affairs.

Nevertheless, the food situation had reached crisis proportions by the summer of 1916, with severe shortages of food and phenomenal increases in prices in Petrograd and Moscow. The crisis is often attributed to decreased agricultural production, but on the whole more than enough was produced to feed the army and the population at least until the end of 1917. Another factor that is often cited as the cause of the crisis was the paralysis of railway transportation. But, as Stone argues, 'It was not trains, but timetables that offered problems'.²⁰

The most important cause of the breakdown in supply was the change in economic patterns during the war. Russian industry, which had converted to war industries, provided little for the peasants in exchange for their products, and when it did, the industrial goods came at an enormously high price. As a result, the peasants were unwilling to take their products to market; this, in turn, caused the price of foodstuffs to skyrocket, and provided ample room for speculation. The government gingerly experimented with price controls, but fixed prices were not used uniformly in various localities but rather coexisted with the free market price mechanism. Even if the government had enforced rigorous, uniform fixed prices, as the Kadets were insisting, it is doubtful that it would have solved the food supply crisis. The peasants would have hoarded their products or converted them to other uses or simply produced less.

Another solution would have been forced requisition at a price dictated by the government. The special council actually experimented with this method half-heartedly in the form of Rittikh's requisition (*razverstka*). Rittikh's experiment was interrupted by the February Revolution, but the earlier indications

19 Zaitsev and Demosthenov 1931, pp. 4–5. See also Fallows 1978; Kitanina 1985.

20 Kondrat'ev 1922, pp. 38–71; Stone 1975, pp. 292–5, 298.

were that it would have been a failure. Forced requisition, as the Bolsheviks were to learn during the Civil War, would have reduced agricultural production to a subsistence level. The problem was more complex than the special council alone could have handled. Nor could any panacea have been found in simple policies such as the fixed prices and requisition, or in bureaucratic reorganisation that would concentrate food supply matters either in the hands of the ministry of internal affairs or in the hands of voluntary organisations or local self-governments. Under the circumstances, the special council's policy of limited governmental intervention, while allowing the market mechanism to function, was probably the best course of action. Shortcomings such as the acute food shortage in Petrograd and Moscow could have been handled by drastically rearranging priorities, although that would not have provided an ultimate solution. But before these measures could be implemented, the social and political fabric of society was torn apart.²¹

Given the complexity of the food supply crisis, the dictatorship proposed by General Alekseev could not have performed the necessary miracle to solve the crisis. Nicholas supported Alekseev's proposal and granted Stürmer 'dictatorial power'. A new agency, the Committee to Combat the Cost of Living Increase, was created under the chairman of the Council of Ministers. The result, however, was even greater bureaucratic confusion in dealing with the complicated tasks that had been handled more expertly by the Special Council for Food Supply.

Meanwhile, as the food crisis worsened in the autumn of 1916, the workers' strike movement picked up momentum. It was only at this point that the liberals finally raised their voices against the government. The liberal newspapers demanded the convocation of the Duma. The Progressive Bloc entrusted Rodzianko with the task of seeking an audience with the tsar to press this demand, but Nicholas refused to receive him. As Petrograd began to show signs of restlessness, the moral decay of the government became more manifest. Stürmer's private secretary, A.A. Manasevich-Manuilov, a journalist connected with the Rasputin clique, was arrested for bribery and extortion, on the order of A.A. Khvostov (not to be confused with his nephew, Khvostov the Scoundrel), now minister of internal affairs. In this incident Rasputin's name loomed again. Stürmer's 'dictatorship' was dealt a heavy blow, and Nicholas lost his enthusiasm for the 'dictator'. After Manasevich-Manuilov's arrest, Stürmer's

21 For a different interpretation on the causes of the food supply problem, see Fallows 1978, pp. 72–3. Fallows believes the government's failure to develop an efficient mechanism to be the main cause of the problem.

intrigue against the elder Khvostov intensified. The upright minister of internal affairs had already incurred the disfavour of the tsarina for having Sukhomlinov brought to trial despite her repeated entreaties to release him from prison. On 16 September, Khvostov was dismissed, but instead of Stürmer, A.D. Protopopov was named acting minister of internal affairs.

Protopopov and the Liberals

Protopopov's Appointment and His Programmes

Simbirsk, a small, poor province along the middle Volga, is said to have given the Russian Revolution three gifts: Lenin, Kerenskii, and Protopopov. Protopopov, a landowner in Simbirsk, a member of the Octobrist party and vice-chairman of the Duma, was the first representative of society to head the ministry of internal affairs. Chairman of the newly formed Council of Metal Factory Owners as well as of the Congress of Bankers, he was closely associated with the conservative Petrograd financial and industrial magnates. He harboured a secret desire to assume a governmental post, and for that purpose, he did not hesitate to use the influence of the court camarilla. From 1903 he had maintained a secret association with a Tibetan doctor, P.A. Badmaev, whose circle Rasputin and other court dignitaries also frequented. Through Badmaev, Protopopov was acquainted with Rasputin. Already the business circles represented by Putilov and Vyshnegradskii had urged his candidacy for minister of finance through Rasputin. Unaware of this manoeuvre, Rodzianko recommended that Nicholas appoint Protopopov minister of trade and industry. As it became obvious to Nicholas and the court camarilla that Stürmer's 'dictatorship' would not solve the food supply crisis, Protopopov's proposal to mobilise the help of the business community in solving the crisis caught their attention. In the face of growing signs of militancy among the liberals, Nicholas wished to muzzle their criticism by broadening the base of the government by inviting the participation of the most conservative element of society.²²

The liberals' initial reaction to Protopopov's appointment was overwhelmingly favourable. The liberal press expressed a hope that Protopopov would be instrumental in implementing liberal reforms. Rumours spread that Protopopov's appointment would be followed by Rodzianko's appointment as chairman of the Council of Ministers. Believing this rumour, Rodzianko went as far as to set the terms of acceptance, which included the deportation of the

22 Kulikov 2004, pp. 277–8.

empress to Livadia, a resort in the Crimea. Even Konovalov believed that in a few months, a Miliukov cabinet might be formed.²³

Although Protopopov is often pictured as an unprincipled careerist, somewhat unstable mentally, he had a comprehensive plan for internal reform. His policy included land reform, granting peasants the land confiscated from the German colonists, zemstvo reforms, removal of the restrictions on the Jews in industry and trade (a plan that earned the ire of the reactionaries), and the institution of a mechanism of governmental checks and balances by making the executive branch responsible to a judiciary organ instead of the Duma. On the food supply question, he proposed the elimination of the fixed price and of governmental interference in commercial transactions for agricultural products. On labour questions, he proved to be a reactionary, opposing any attempts by the Central War Industries Committee to organise the workers.²⁴

The Liberals Turn against Protopopov

The liberals' enthusiasm about Protopopov's appointment, however, soon turned into anger, as he began to behave more like a representative of Rasputin than a representative of society. Rodzianko was irritated by Protopopov's secret dinner appointments with Vyubova and Stürmer. Moreover, to the consternation of his liberal colleagues in the Duma, the former vice-chairman tactlessly appeared before the Duma Budget Commission in the uniform of the chief of gendarmerie – a symbol of tsarist oppression. Attempting to recover the confidence of his former colleagues, Protopopov asked Rodzianko to arrange a meeting with the liberal leaders. But contrary to his expectations, he met with sharp rebukes and denunciations at the meeting. Miliukov declared that the liberals could not be friendly with 'the person who serves with Stürmer, [the person] who sets Sukhomlinov free, the person who persecutes the liberal press'.²⁵ Deeply offended, Protopopov never again tried to reach a compromise with the liberals but rather took vengeance through such repressive measures

23 Rodzianko 1973, pp. 213–14; For the reaction of the liberals to Protopopov's appointment, see Diakin 1967a, pp. 230–2; Chermenskii 1976, pp. 199–200; Arkhipov 2000, pp. 42–3; Gaida 2003, pp. 221–4.

24 For the traditional interpretation of Protopopov, see Pares 1939, pp. 376–91; Florinsky 1931, pp. 90–2. Diakin rehabilitates Protopopov as a politician with a serious plan for comprehensive internal reforms, who reflected the conservative segment of industrial and financial circles in Petrograd. For Protopopov's policy, see Diakin 1967a, p. 233; Diakin 1967b, pp. 376–7; Chermenskii 1976, pp. 198–9. For more details of Protopopov and the liberals' reaction, see Kulikov 2004, pp. 271–91.

25 Shliapnikov 1923b, pp. 115–24. Also see GARF. f. 102, d. 307a, t. 2, 1916 g. ll. 41–3.

as banning all public gatherings without the presence of police. The liberals could not forgive the defector who had crossed over to the enemy camp, and heaped vicious invectives on him. The Octobrist party formally stripped him of membership.

On 15 October, Protopopov proposed his food policy at the Council of Ministers' meeting. Prior to the meeting, the chairman of the Special Council for Food Supply, Count A.A. Bobrinskii, had taken measures to extend participation of the local self-governments in the procurement of grain. Alarmed by growing liberal influence in the supply mechanism, Protopopov, through his counter-proposal, attempted to concentrate all food supply matters in the hands of the ministry of internal affairs. Despite objections raised by Bobrinskii and P.N. Ignat'ev (minister of education), Protopopov's proposal gained support from the majority of the ministers. But when Protopopov made his proposal more elaborate at the next meeting, a majority began to have second thoughts, realising that it would provoke opposition in the Duma.²⁶ Nicholas, however, supported Protopopov, approving the elimination of the liberal elements in the food supply mechanism. As soon as Protopopov's proposal reached the ears of the liberals, their reaction was quick and unanimous; the Budget Commission on 18 October unanimously adopted a resolution denouncing the proposed policy. The prospect of a liberal offensive on the eve of the convocation of the Duma session led Protopopov to waver at the last moment. His assistant, General P.G. Kurlov, director of the Police Department, warned him that if he should adjourn the Duma in response to its criticism of his policy, it might provoke a large-scale mass disturbance. To the disappointment of Rasputin and Alexandra, Protopopov had to withdraw the proposal.²⁷

Miliukov's 'Stupidity or Treason' Speech

The food crisis, the awakening of the strike movement, and Protopopov's provocation raised the temper of the liberals on the eve of the new session of the Duma scheduled for 1 November. The Progressists led by Efremov and Konovalov and the left Kadets criticised Miliukov's policy of moderation,

²⁶ Kulikov 2004, p. 285.

²⁷ For Protopopov's proposal at the Council of Ministers' meeting, see GARF, f. 1276, op. 12, d. 1288b, ll. 2–5, 6–10, 12–13, 14–17, 20–8, 40; RGIA, f. 1276, op. 12, d. 1790, 168–78. For the discussion of the food supply question in the Budget Commission, see RGIA, f. 1278, op. 5, d. 330, ll. 2–534; its resolution against Protopopov's policy, ll. 516–19. Diakin 1967a, pp. 239–40; Chermenskii 1976, p. 201; Kulikov 2004, p. 287.

demanding the adoption of a slogan for the establishment of a responsible ministry and advocating an ultimatum to the government from the Progressive Bloc on the opening day. Against these radical opponents Vasiliĭ Maklakov argued that the Duma was not capable of creating a responsible ministry in view of the fundamental differences on the basic issues among the various parties within the Progressive Bloc. 'If we want to go all the way, we must talk about more than a responsible ministry', he said, 'but we will not talk about that'. 'Fight we must; the government is rotten', Shul'gin joined, 'But since we are not going to the barricades, we cannot egg others on. The Duma must be a safety valve, letting off steam, not creating it'. The only matter they agreed on was their opposition to Stürmer and Protopopov. On this basis Miliukov and Shul'gin set out to prepare a draft declaration, from which a demand for a responsible ministry was conspicuously dropped. This timidity disgusted the Progressists, who withdrew in protest from the Progressive Bloc. The left-wing Kadets threatened to follow. It was necessary for Miliukov to do something to prevent the collapse of the Progressive Bloc by keeping the left Kadets within the Bloc.²⁸ The liberals felt the earth was moving from their feet, sensing the coming of revolution. Later Miliukov admitted: 'I thought at that moment, it seems, that revolution was inevitable, and if so it would be necessary to take it in our hands'.²⁹

Miliukov's speech on 1 November was, therefore, intended to restore the moral authority of the Progressive Bloc in the eyes of the critics of his leadership and to prevent further defection by the left-wing Kadets. On this opening day, Shidlovskii, an Octobrist and the formal head of the Progressive Bloc, read the declaration of the Bloc, written by Miliukov and Shul'gin, which called for Stürmer's resignation. Then Miliukov dropped the bombshell. He attacked Stürmer, insinuated his rumoured intrigue for a separate peace, and ended each paragraph with the rhetorical question: 'Is this stupidity or treason?' The speech was certainly a broadside, as Katkov calls it, since Miliukov had no factual evidence to prove Stürmer's treason. Miliukov himself later admitted that it was not his intention to prove Stürmer's treason, which he did not believe in the first place.³⁰

28 *Progressivnyi blok* 1933, pp. 87, 114. For the discussions in the Progressive Bloc in October, see *ibid.*, pp. 82–117; Pearson 1977, pp. 108–15; Arkhipov 2000, pp. 44–5; Kulikov 2004, pp. 286–7; Gaida 2003, pp. 220–52.

29 For the background of Miliukov's speech, see Gaida 2003, pp. 230–2.

30 For the Kadets' strategy to prepare Miliukov's speech, demonstrating the liberal offensive against the 'dark forces' while carefully avoiding anything that might incite revolution, see Arkhipov 2000, pp. 45–6; Lyandres 2004, pp. 457–60.

The speech, however, caused an immediate sensation. Although stricken from the official stenographic record on the government censor's order, it was printed clandestinely and widely circulated among the urban population as well as among the soldiers at the front. At a time when scandal was clouding the government, Miliukov's speech fed the population with what they wanted to believe: the government's treason. It was basically motivated 'not by the guilt or incompetence of Stürmer but [by] the complex predicament of the Progressive Bloc in the developing revolutionary climate of Russia in late 1916', but as Pearson aptly states, what had been intended to 'let off [the] steam' of the revolutionary movement had the effect of 'making steam'. With this speech, as Arkhipov states, the liberals burned the bridge behind them to have a constructive dialog with the government.³¹

Although Stürmer had no advance knowledge of Miliukov's vituperation, he had gotten wind of the adverse mood of the Progressive Bloc prior to the opening of the Duma. Although Nicholas had given him the authority to adjourn the Duma, that was not enough for Stürmer. He asked the tsar for the authority to dissolve it entirely and order a new election. Nicholas hesitated, but finally acquiesced, granting Stürmer an imperial manifesto to dissolve the Duma, only with the warning that he should use it wisely and only in an extreme case.³² On 1 November Stürmer suffered the humiliation of having to sit through and listen to Miliukov's tirade. Immediately after reading the government's declaration, Stürmer, pale with anger, walked out of the hall. Later that day, at a cabinet meeting, Stürmer angrily declared that either the Duma or he had to go. All the ministers except three, however, thought that if either had to go, it should not be the Duma. By this time Nicholas himself was inclined to agree with the majority in the cabinet.

The Military and Relatives Pressure Nicholas

Nicholas hesitated to take strong measures against the Duma in November, despite Miliukov's speech, for two reasons: pressure from the military leaders and pressure from his own relatives. After the demise of Alekseev's recommendation for the establishment of a dictatorship, Alekseev and his commanding staff at the Stavka had sympathised with the Progressive Bloc's demand for a ministry of confidence. Alekseev strongly advised Nicholas against measures to repress the Duma because such measures would lower the morale of the sol-

31 Katkov 1967, pp. 190–3; Miliukov 1955, pp. 276–7; Pearson 1977, pp. 115, 117; Arkhipov 2000, pp. 48–51. For the reactions to Miliukov's speech, see Gaida 2003, pp. 232–7.

32 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 10, d. 7, l. 97.

diers. According to Chermenskii, it was at Alekseev's urging that Nicholas had finally decided to convene the Duma. It is interesting to note that in November Alekseev allegedly agreed to take part in a plot engineered by Prince G.E. L'vov to deport the tsarina to the Crimea.³³ Whether or not Nicholas was aware of such a plot, the pressure from the military was something to be reckoned with. Presumably at Alekseev's urging, minister of war D.D. Shuvaev, and minister of the navy I.K. Grigorovich, appeared at the Duma, imploring the Duma liberals to get down to the practical tasks of national defence. The moderate leadership of the Progressive Bloc, already frightened by what the government's reaction might be to their sharp attacks, gave a sigh of relief at the appearance of the two ministers in the Duma.

Nicholas's relatives were greatly disturbed by the meddling of Rasputin and Alexandra in internal politics, which reached its apogee in the autumn of 1916. At the end of October Nicholas took a trip to Kiev, where he was confronted by critical relatives that included Dowager Empress Maria Fedorovna, Grand Dukes Aleksandr Mikhailovich, Pavel Aleksandrovich, and Grand Duchess Mariia Pavlovna. The dowager empress, Nicholas's own mother, had sworn that she would never set foot in Petrograd as long as Alexandra was there. After Nicholas returned to Mogilev, Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich (son of Alexander II's brother, Mikhail), an accomplished historian with close connections with the moderate liberals, visited the tsar and handed him a letter advising him in the strongest terms to rid himself of Rasputin's influence and to be cautious of his wife's advice. But Nicholas's loyalty to his wife was unbending. He immediately sent Nikolai Mikhailovich's confidential letter to Alexandra, who wrote back, telling him to ship this 'shady character and a grandson of a Jew' to Siberia. On 5 November, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, former commander in chief and Nicholas's cousin once removed, visited the tsar at the Stavka, and strongly recommended the establishment of a ministry of confidence. During the conversation the emperor did not utter a single word, and at the end he shrugged his shoulders and ushered his cousin out of the room. The grand duke sensed that the fate of the monarchy was sealed.³⁴

Under these pressures, however, Nicholas decided to dismiss Stürmer. On this Alexandra agreed. She wrote to Nicholas: 'Since Stürmer plays the role of a red flag in this madhouse, it is better to force him to resign'. At this time Nicholas made a rare attempt to free himself of the influence of his

33 Chermenskii 1976, pp. 214–15. See Chapter 10. For the Stavka's increasing interest in domestic politics, see Ganelin/Florinskii 1997, pp. 24–6.

34 Nikolai Mikhailovich's letter quoted in Alexandrov 1966, pp. 119–20; Diakin, 1967a, p. 244; Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, p. 197; Kulikov 2004, pp. 358–72.

domineering wife. He resented receiving a list of candidates from Alexandra and Rasputin, and wrote back: 'Only I ask you. Don't let Our Friend [Rasputin] interfere. I assume the responsibility, and therefore, I wish to be free in the selection'. On 9 November, he dismissed Stürmer, and over the objections of his wife, appointed A.F. Trepov his successor.

The Progressive Bloc greeted Stürmer's downfall as a victory. Miliukov's tactics worked. Without making any constitutional demands as the Progressists and the left Kadets had insisted, Miliukov restored the prestige of the Progressive Bloc and the Duma as a leading centre of the opposition movement against the government. After his speech Miliukov's popularity reached its zenith. Adzhemov noted, 'I am convinced that by the new year of 1917, there will be a triumphant funeral of autocracy'. But there were voices of caution and apprehension. An Octobrist, B.A. Engal'hardt, warned that Miliukov's speech was adding fuel to the fire, inciting the masses to revolution.³⁵

Trepov and the Liberals and Pukrishkevich's Speech

Purishkevich Delivers a Shocking Speech

Trepov, who had been minister of transport prior to the appointment to the premiership, was a conservative but honest bureaucrat, not connected with the Rasputin clique. For that reason Alexandra opposed the appointment of an enemy of 'Our Friend'. Unlike his predecessors Trepov saw the necessity of cooperating with the Duma and was interested in establishing in the Duma a new right-wing majority willing to work with the government. He attempted to lure the conservative elements of the Progressive Bloc into this majority, thus crippling the strength of the liberal opposition. To achieve this, he was prepared to sacrifice Protopopov, who had become, by this time, the *bête noir* for the liberals. Trepov succeeded in gaining the tsar's approval of Protopopov's dismissal. He also made an unsuccessful attempt to bribe Rasputin to leave the capital.³⁶

The liberal's reaction to Trepov varied. While the right wing of the Progressive Bloc welcomed him as a second Stolypin, the Progressists complained that nothing had changed with Trepov's appointment and insisted on continuing the attack. Miliukov and the leadership of the Progressive Bloc, however, wel-

35 Diakin 1967a, pp. 246, 261; Pearson, 1977, pp. 116–17. For a more nuanced view concerning the reactions of the liberals, see Arkhipov 2000, pp. 49–50.

36 Diakina 1967a, p. 373. For Trepov's tenure, see Kulikov 2004, pp. 304–18.

comed Trepov and considered it possible to cooperate with his government as long as he dropped Protopopov. When the new chairman of the Council of Ministers appeared in the Duma on 19 November to read the declaration of his cabinet, the socialist deputies led by N.S. Chkheidze and A.F. Kerenskii booed and jeered him for forty minutes, preventing him from reading the declaration. The liberals, who would have nothing to do with such a disruptive tactic, voted to remove the socialist deputies from the floor. Menshevik Chkhenkeli declared: 'You must realize that a struggle is going on between the government and the people, and as long as you want to take part in this struggle, you must completely break with the government and turn to the people'.³⁷

The liberals' verbal attacks were now heaped on Protopopov, but they were careful not to criticise Trepov and his government. The most sensational attack on the government, however, came from totally unexpected quarters. The right-wing deputy, M.V. Purishkevich, a founder of the reactionary Union of the Russian People and a staunch monarchist, delivered an impassioned speech in which he attacked, amid the hushed audience, the 'dark forces' led by 'Grisha Rasputin' that had infiltrated the court and the government in the interests of the enemy, and termed the perennial appointments and dismissals of the ministers 'ministerial leapfrog'. The liberals welcomed this speech enthusiastically. 'Better late than never', commented Miliukov, 'Purishkevich opened his eyes, admittedly belatedly, but nonetheless he opened his eyes. This fact itself is extremely important'.³⁸

Purishkevich's speech represented the opinion of the conservative element of the nation, which because of its firm belief in the monarchy, was all the more disturbed by Rasputin's influence and Alexandra's meddling. On 26 November, the State Council, the usually conservative upper house, known as 'the gravedigger' of the Duma's legislative initiatives, passed a resolution urging Nicholas to remove the 'dark forces' from the government. The United Nobility, which held its congress from 27 November to 1 December, also passed a resolution attacking the 'dark forces' and calling for the establishment of a government that could cooperate with the legislative chambers.³⁹ This was a

37 Chermenskii 1976, p. 223; Gaida 2003, pp. 239–43.

38 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 10, d. 7, l. 386. For Purishkevich's position, see Arkhipov 2000, pp. 56–7; Gaida 2003, pp. 244–5.

39 Chermenskii 1976, pp. 228–9; Pearson 1977, pp. 125–6. The government also recognised that it was losing the support of the conservative majority in the State Council. See RGIA, f. 1276, op. 10, d. 7, l. 413.

stunning change of opinion among the conservatives, considering that little more than a year earlier, the United Nobility had expressed its dissatisfaction with the government's flirtation with the Duma.⁴⁰

Alexandra Urges Nicholas to Stand Firm

Pressure from the grand dukes also continued. At the end of November a family gathering took place in Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovich's house. Grand Duke Pavel Aleksandrovich, as doyen of the family, was entrusted with the task of persuading the tsar to again change his policy. Nicholas received Grand Duke Pavel Aleksandrovich on 3 December but his plea to give the nation a constitution, or at least a ministry of confidence, fell on deaf ears. 'What you ask is impossible', Nicholas declared, 'the day of my coronation I took my oath to the Absolute Power. I must leave this oath intact to my son'.⁴¹

Although Nicholas had showed signs of independence from his wife for a flicker of a moment, once Alexandra began her relentless letter-writing campaign, he easily gave in. When Nicholas was contemplating the possibility of dismissing Protopopov, she urged: 'My dear, look at their faces – Trepov's and Protopopov's. Is it not clear that the face of the latter is purer, more honest, and more upright?' It was not simply a matter of Protopopov, she insisted, but a matter of autocracy. It was about time to show the nation who was boss – to show that it was he who was the autocrat, not the Duma. Suspicious of her husband's strength of will, she visited him at the Stavka one day, and succeeded in reversing his decision to dump Protopopov. As for Rasputin's influence, Alexandra wrote:

Oh, my dear, I pray to God so passionately to convince you that in Him [Rasputin] lies our salvation. If He weren't here, I don't know what would become of us. He is saving us with His prayers and His wise advice ... He [Rasputin] lives for you and for Russia. We must hand to the Baby [Aleksei] a strong country and cannot be weak for his sake; otherwise, it will be much more difficult for him to reign.

She encouraged her wavering husband: 'Be like Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible, and Emperor Paul', giving fine examples of monarchs who used the cruellest punishments on their subjects. She expressed intense anger against the enemies of autocracy by suggesting that the tsar should exile opponents

40 For the division of the conservative right, see Loukianov 2016, pp. 872–95.

41 Paley n.d., pp. 24–7.

such as Miliukov, L'vov, Guchkov, and Polivanov to Siberia.⁴² These outbursts were enough to make the weak-willed sovereign capitulate.

*The Zemstvo Union and the Progressive Bloc Cowered before
Repression*

While the Progressive Bloc followed the parliamentary path charted by Miliukov, the voluntary organisations became increasingly vociferous in their attacks on the government. Both the Union of Zemstvos and the Union of Towns planned a congress for the beginning of December, and also attempted to hold an All-Russian Congress of Food Supply in Moscow, inviting the representatives of liberal as well as labour organisations. By this time the rank and file of the voluntary organisations had become so radicalised that they were insisting, over the objections of L'vov and Chelnokov, that if the government banned the congresses, the meetings should be held illegally. Some openly advocated the overthrow of the regime in cooperation with the masses of workers. Such radicalism frightened the heads of the unions, who were relieved when they received the government's order to ban meetings.

On 9 December the police entered the building in Moscow where the representatives of the Union of Towns and the Union of Zemstvos had gathered and dispersed them before their meetings could begin. Having anticipated the police repression, however, the Union of Zemstvos had previously adopted a resolution that was made public by Prince L'vov. The resolution declared that the nation was in danger, called for the Duma to stop cooperating with the government, and demanded the immediate establishment of a responsible ministry. Just as Miliukov had found it necessary to attack the government on 1 November to prevent further defection of the left Kadets from the Progressive Bloc, Prince L'vov used strong language to placate the radical workers of the voluntary organisations.⁴³ Faced with mounting criticism, Protopopov attempted to muzzle the liberals by closing down all the proposed meetings. The congresses of the Union of Towns and the Union of Zemstvos and the Congress of the Food Supply Question were not the only meetings banned by the police. Others included the meetings of paediatricians, the polytechnical society, dental school assistants, and the historical circle of Shniavskii People's University.⁴⁴

42 Perepiska 1923, pp. 174, 184, 187; Diakin 1967a, p. 261.

43 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 27, ch. 46, 1916 g., l. 30. For the radicalism of rank-and-file workers in the Unions of Towns and their conflict with the leaders, see Gleason 1976, pp. 290–302.

44 Diakin 1967a, p. 259.

The Progressive Bloc, which other liberal organisations expected to play the central role in the struggle against the government, continued to drag its feet. Konovalov, who had already walked out of the Bloc, proposed to his liberal colleagues that they combat the government through a general strike of liberal organisations. This would include the self-prorogation of the Duma and the resignations of L'vov and Chelnokov from the Unions and Towns and of Zemstvos. Konovalov's proposal, however, was received coldly and, even worse, snickered at by his liberal colleagues as a quixotic gesture. An Okhrana agent reported: 'If the government would show the slightest sign of concession, the Kadets would come around to meet it'. Despite the sensational speeches delivered by Miliukov and Purishkevich, the Duma accomplished little and adjourned for Christmas recess on 16 December. On the last day of the Duma session Miliukov stated:

Our goal has not been fulfilled, and this must loudly be admitted. To the same degree that the faith in the popular representation is being lost, other forces, gentlemen, are entering into action. We are now experiencing a terrible moment. Before our very eyes, the liberal struggle is getting beyond the framework of strict legality and like in 1905 illegal forces are again emerging. The atmosphere is full of electricity. One can feel in the air the approach of thunder. No one knows, gentlemen, where and when lightning will strike.⁴⁵

Assassination of Rasputin

Several hours after this speech was delivered in the Tauride Palace, on the other side of the city a flash of lightning struck in the elegant Iusupov Palace on the Moika River – a flash, which, to be sure, did not immediately bring a storm, but nonetheless foreshadowed its approach. Rasputin had been invited by young Prince Felix Iusupov, married to Nicholas's niece Irina, to his house on the pretext that his stunningly beautiful wife, who was actually vacationing in the Crimea, wished the privilege of meeting the holy man. His weakness for women this time proved fatal for Rasputin, for the conspirators – Purishkevich, Prince Iusupov, Grand Duke Dmitrii Pavlovich (Nicholas's cousin and the son of Pavel Aleksandrovich, doyen of the imperial family), and a few others – brutally murdered him and dumped his body into the frozen Neva. The names

45 Chermenskii 1976, pp. 231–2; Gaida 2003, pp. 251–2.

of the assassins were telling evidence of how rotten the foundations of the tsarist regime had become. They were not revolutionary bomb throwers but the staunchest monarchists, who believed that the only way to save the monarchy was to get rid of Rasputin. 'The holy devil' was surgically removed, but his removal did not change the political climate. Rather it cast an ominous shadow on the future.⁴⁶

The 'sacred union' between the government and the liberals, formed at the outbreak of the war, had degenerated into mutual distrust by the end of 1916. Theoretically, there were various options open to both sides, which would ultimately have led to the total and final split between the two. The government could have dissolved the Fourth Duma, ordered a new election to the Fifth Duma, or suspended the Duma entirely during the war. It could also have disbanded all voluntary organisations, expelled the representatives of society from the special councils, and monopolised the food supply system. It could have arrested the Miliukovs and Guchkovs and shipped them to Siberia. These measures were in fact proposed by individual ministers and various reactionary groups, and some of these ideas were seriously contemplated. But the government never took a decisive step that might once and for all have ruptured the relationship with the liberals.

Nicholas's actions during the war, at least from the tactical point of view, were skilful manipulations of the conflicting advice he received from the two opposing camps of advisors. By rejecting the reactionary policy favouring a virtual declaration of war against society, Nicholas kept the illusion of the internal reforms alive among the liberals, thereby keeping the liberals from taking radical action against the government. And yet he never allowed his concessions to go beyond the limit he could tolerate for the preservation of the integrity of autocracy. Nicholas's 'stick and carrot' emasculated the liberal opposition and won him a tactical victory. But he did not realise that beneath the inaction of the liberals there was deep despair and anger that psychologically paved the way for their rejection of the regime. The tactical victory thus, in the long run, cost him the war.

On the other hand, the liberals could have taken more decisive action. They could have boycotted the special councils, passively resisted the government by withdrawing their support for government policies, and made an alliance with the workers. Such a course was advocated by Konovalov and other left-wing liberals, and, from outside, was strongly urged by the moderate socialists,

46 Kulikov 2004, p. 366. For the reaction of the liberals to the assassination, see Arkhivov 2000, pp. 58–9.

who wanted to see the Russian bourgeoisie lead a struggle to overthrow the tsarist regime in the same way that the French 'bourgeoisie' had toppled the monarchy and accomplished a 'bourgeois-democratic revolution'. The liberals, however, refused to take any decisive action against the government.

One factor that prevented the final breakup of the bad marriage was the mutual fear of a revolution in time of war. Despite the unfounded rumour about the government's intrigue for a separate peace, both the government and the liberals were deeply committed to the continuation of the war. Not only would a revolution be fatal to the war effort, but it would threaten their very existence. The government was, therefore, not anxious to throw the liberals to the other side of the barricade. And the liberals were careful not to ignite an explosive mass movement by appealing directly to the masses to overthrow the government.⁴⁷

There was another aspect that explained the avoidance of the final breakup. Although the political relationship between the government and the liberals became strained, the war brought the two closer together in terms of economic organisation. To meet the economic needs created by the war, the government unwittingly relied more and more on the initiative of the industrialists, the voluntary organisations, and municipal and local self-governments. By the same token, the latter needed the centralised guidance of the government. To take one example, the food supply system represented the close relationship and interdependence between government and society. The government could not feed the army and the population without cooperation from the *zemstvos* and city *dumas*; and without the centralised bureaucratic mechanism and the guidance of the bureaucracy, the liberals could not have handled the enormous task of food supply. Their mutual hatred and distrust, combined with the mutual dependency, made their relationship peculiarly ambiguous. And this ambiguity would ultimately colour the nature of the February Revolution.

47 Pointing out the importance of these voluntary organisations and their symbiotic relations with the government agencies, Peter Holoquist calls them 'parastatistical' organisations. See Holoquist 2002, Chapter 1.

Petrograd During the War

Petrograd, City of Decadence and Depravity

During the years of the war, Petrograd stood, in melancholy beauty, silent witness to the madness: the patriotic fever that seized the people in the streets at the outbreak of the war, Rasputin and the debauchery of aristocratic ladies, the oppressive silence of the long queues in front of the bakeries, angry mobs of workers on strike, underground revolutionaries conspiring around dim lamps, the mounted police whipping fleeing demonstrators with their *nagaikas*, nightly gatherings of poets, writers, and artists at Café Stray Dog, the sudden upsurge of crime, armed robberies committed by juvenile delinquents, an epidemic of suicides, and prostitutes seeking clients both in high society and among the urban poor. A city of decadence and depravity, it smelled of blood, lust, and anger. The Soviet historical novelist Aleksei Tolstoi described Petrograd during the war:

Two centuries had passed like a dream: Petersburg, standing at the end of the earth, on the marshes and wastelands, had been lost in reverie of unlimited glory and power. Like visions in a delirium, palace coups, murders of emperors, triumphs, and bloody executions passed in a flash. Weak women seized a semidivine power. Sturdily built youths arrived with hands still black with dirt, and dared to climb up on the throne in order to share power, bed, and Byzantine luxury.

The neighbors looked around with horror to see these mad explosions of fantasy. With despondency and fear the Russian people surrendered to the delirium of the capital. The country fed Petersburg with its own blood, but never satisfied her appetite.

Petersburg lived a night life, satiated and shivering with excitement. Phosphorous summer nights, insane and voluptuous, and sleepless winter nights, green tables and a rustle of gold, music, twirling couples behind the windows, mad troikas, gypsies, duels at dawn, in the whistle of icy wind and the shrill sound of the flute – a parade of troops in front of the Byzantine eyes of the Emperor, which conjured up horror – thus lived the city. In the past decade grandiose enterprises had been established with incredible speed. Millions of fortunes appeared as if from thin air. With crystal and cement they built banks, music halls, skating rinks, and

magnificent saloons, where people became deadened by music, reflections of mirrors, half-naked women, light, and champagne. Hurriedly, gambling clubs, whorehouses, theaters, movie houses, and luna parks were opened. Engineers and capitalists worked for a project for a new construction, which would surpass the luxury of the capital, in an inhabited island not far from Petersburg.

In the city there was an epidemic of suicides. Courtrooms were filled with crowds of hysterical women, greedily demanding bloody and stimulating trials. Everything was possible – luxury and women. Debauchery was everywhere. It struck the palace like an infection.

And an illiterate *muzhik* with mad eyes and mighty masculine power reached the palace and the imperial throne, and mocking and sneering, began to defame Russia.

Petersburg, like any other city, lived a single life, tense and worried. The central power led this movement, but it did not go along with what could be called the spirit of the city. The central power strove to create order, peace, and expediency, while the spirit of the city strove to destroy this power. The spirit of destruction was in everything, saturating with its deadly poison the grandiose machinations of the stock market by famous Sashka Sakelman, the dark anger of a worker in a steel mill, and the broken dreams of a fashionable poetess, sitting after four o'clock in the morning in the artists' basement of 'Red Bells', – even those who were supposed to fight against it, unaware of it themselves, did everything to reinforce and quicken the destruction.

It was the time when love, and good, healthy feelings were considered banal and obsolete. No one loved, but everyone longed, like the poisoned, to press himself to everything so sharp that it would lacerate internal organs.

Girls concealed their virginity, wives their fidelity. Destruction was considered good taste, and neurasthenia a sign of refinement. This was preached by popular writers who emerged in one season from obscurity. People schemed up vices and perversions only to desire new ones.

Such was Petersburg in 1914. Tormented by sleepless nights, and numb with anguish caused by wine, money, unloved love, and the tearing and hopelessly emotional sounds of the Tango – a hymn of death – she lived as if in expectation of the fateful and terrible day. And that was a sure premonition – something new and incomprehensible was crawling out of every crack.¹

1 Tolstoi 1951, vol. 3, pp. 8–10.

Petrograd: Centre of the Government and Major Streets

Petrograd, the largest metropolis in the Russian Empire, was the centre of everything. It was the seat of government, the economic and industrial centre, and the mecca of cultural activities. All the government's buildings were concentrated in the centre of the city on the left bank of the Neva (see Map 1). The sumptuous Winter Palace faced the Neva on the north, and massive Palace Square on the south. On the other side, across Palace Square, it faced the crescent shape general staff buildings, where in addition to the main administration of the general staff, the ministries of foreign affairs and of finance were housed together. On the west side of the Winter Palace along the Neva stood the Admiralty with its high spire. Across from the Admiralty on the south the *gradonachal'stvo*, the headquarters of the Okhrana and the police, occupied the corner of Gorokhovaia Street and on its west side, two stone lions guarded the yellow building of the war ministry. Further west on the Neva, across from the statue of the bronze horseman in Senate Square, stood the buildings of the Senate and the Holy Synod. Next to the war ministry on the south towered St. Isaac's Cathedral, the tallest building in Petrograd. If one stood by the statue of Nicholas I on horseback in the middle of Isaak'skaia Square in front of St. Isaac's, one would see on the east the ministry of agriculture next to the Hotel Astoria, one of the most luxurious hotels in Petrograd (which was commandeered by the military authority for officers on leave and officers of Allied Nations) and on the south, the Mariinskii Palace, the seat of the Council of Ministers and the State Council. A short walk from the Winter Palace to Mariinskaia Square, which would not take more than half an hour, would be enough for one to be overwhelmed by the power of the tsarist regime.²

From the Winter Palace Millionnaia Streets ran east, lining on both sides the most luxurious palaces of grand dukes and grand duchesses. Further east lay the massive parade ground, the Mars Field, and beyond, the Summer Garden with alleys decorated with white marble statues. On the gate of the garden there was a sign: 'No dogs and private soldiers are allowed to enter'.

The most famous street in Petrograd was the Nevskii Prospekt. Along this boulevard, stretching two and three-quarter miles from the Admiralty to the Aleksandro-Nevskaia Monastery, there were banks, stores such as Eliseev's, Martens, the office of Singer Sewing Machine, the most famous department store, the Gostinyi Dvor, many hotels, including the luxurious Evropeiskaia,

2 The most important reference book for geographical locations in Petrograd 1917 is *Ves' Petrograd 1917*.

and expensive restaurants and cafes. There were also palaces: the Anichkov Palace, the Stroganov Palace, the Palace of Grand Duke Dmitrii Pavlovich, who took part in Rasputin's assassination, and the Mikhailovskii Palace just off the Nevskii. The Kazan Cathedral stood in stark neoclassical grandeur on the north side of the Nevskii. Between Kazan Cathedral and Gostinyi Dvor, across from Hotel Evropeiskaia, stood the city duma with its tall spire. The building next to Gostinyi Dvor across Sadovaia Street was the Imperial Public Library; and between the library and Anichkov Palace, behind the statue of Catherine the Great, was the magnificent Royal Alexander Theatre. In sum, Nevskii Prospekt was the symbol of the wealth and power of the privileged. People who could not afford proper attire usually did not venture onto it, except for shop clerks, street vendors, cab drivers and beggars. There were occasions, however, when the poor did invade Nevskii, disrupting the decorum of privileged society. Since 1876, when the first political demonstration was staged in Kazan Square by the Populists, including young Georgii Plekhanov, later to become the founder of Russian Marxism, the stretch of Nevskii from Kazan Square to Znamenskaia Square in front of the Nikolaevskii Railway Station had been the favourite target of political demonstrations. But because of heavy police protection, workers seldom succeeded in staging a demonstration there.

People and the Economy in Petrograd

The population of Petrograd was approximately two and a half million in 1917, an increase of 200,000 from the beginning of the war. Unfortunately, a breakdown of the population according to occupation during the war does not exist, since the last census was taken in 1910. The 1910 census indicated that of a total population of 1,881,000, workers numbered 504,000 or 27 percent and 234,000 of these were factory workers. The rest of the workers included clerks in commercial and financial organisations (77,000), transport workers (52,000), and waiters, waitresses, and cooks (25,000). In addition, 41,000 worked for the city transport, water, electricity, gas, and other city organisations. There were 58,000 artisans – shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, joiners, painters, cleaners, and so on – constituting three percent of the population. Approximately 260,000 worked as household or institutional servants, guards, stable boys, janitors, cooks, cleaning ladies, laundresses, gardeners, porters, butlers, and so on. These servants, about fourteen percent of the total population, constituted the lower stratum in Petrograd.³

3 Kruze and Kutsentov 1956, pp. 104–46; *Petrograd po perepisi 15 dekabria 1910 goda*, pt. 2.

On the other side of the scale, the nobility numbered 138,000 or 7.2 percent. There were landowners such as the Shremet'evs and Iusupovs, who owned land all over Russia. The Sheremetievs, for instance, owned 800,000 dessiatins of land or 17,600,000 acres. But very few nobles could live solely on their estates. Many had to find other means of support: in the bureaucracy, in the military, in intellectual or professional work, or in business. Some nobles invested their wealth in business and became industrialists. Still a greater number, nobles only by title, were rapidly becoming *déclassé*.

The economic life of Petrograd was dominated by a handful of financial and industrial oligarchs. Altogether the number of businessmen in Petrograd was less than one percent of the total population, but these owners of large banks, joint-stock companies, and huge industrial plants exerted almost exclusive economic control over the city. They formed the Petrograd Association of Factory Owners, led by A.I. Putilov and A.I. Vyshnegradskii. Putilov headed the great Russo-Asian Bank, which had fourteen affiliates and was one of the largest stockholders of the syndicates, Promet, and Putilov Factory, the Neva Shipyard, Baranovskii, the Petrograd Wagon Factory and many others. In contrast to the Moscow industrialists, who became the backbone of the Russian liberal opposition, the Petrograd oligarchs were known by their close association with the government and by their political conservatism. In addition to the large industrialists, there were 21,000 owners of stores, shops, and restaurants.

Approximately 70,000 persons worked in the bureaucracy. They included those officials who reached the highest rungs of what was known as the Table of Ranks, as well as those on the lowest levels, who could not be counted as nobility, but bore the humiliating title of 'honorary citizen'. It is presumed that the economic status of the lowest stratum of the bureaucracy was no better than that of the workers, but they refused to live in the workers' quarters and formed their own ghettos in the inner city. Various members of the intelligentsia and the professional class – writers, artists, university professors, lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers, architects and others engaged in all those professions required for modern city life – numbered roughly 200,000 or eleven percent.

During the war the living standards of the lower middle class deteriorated sharply. According to a city teacher who wrote a letter of complaint to one of the Petrograd newspapers about the difficult lives of teachers, it was impossible to live a decent life on the salary they received. Out of a salary of one hundred rubles a month, at least twenty rubles had to go for rent, and it was almost impossible to find a room for such a low rent in the entire city. Since they could not afford to live in a boarding house, they were forced to eat their main meal in the students' dining halls or in the dining halls run by the city's welfare departments. This itself cost at least twenty-five rubles a month, and since one

could not get by on only one meal a day, another thirty rubles had to be spent for breakfasts and evening snacks. Working among dirty children, the teachers needed at least fifteen rubles for laundry. That meant that they were left with only ten rubles for tea, sugar, paper, the theatre, books and clothes: 'We shall not talk about the high price of boots and skirts, which the teachers dispensed with for three to five years'. Consequently, many teachers were forced to find another job after school, despite strict regulations forbidding such practice. It was not rare that the teachers, the most educated of all Russian women, had not read a single page for months and had not gone to a theatre for years. The writer of the letter bitterly asked: 'What can a person, tired, half-sick, and not living a normal life, teach the children?'⁴ The life of other lower middle-class people could not have been much different. Even the Okhrana agents, spies who worked for the political police, complained about the high cost of living: they could no longer afford to buy 'any underclothes, which in the service of police spies wear out very quickly', and demanded an increase in their wages by five rubles a month.⁵

Petrograd was also an educational and cultural centre. There were sixty institutions of higher education in Petrograd, with 40,000 students, including Petrograd Imperial University, Bestuzhev Women's College, the Mining Institute, the Polytechnical Institute, the Forestry Institute, and Technological Institute. The first three were located in the academic complex that included the Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Artists, and the Zoological Museum on Vasilievskii Island, the centre of learning. Another student district was the Vyborg District and its northern outskirts, which contained the Military Medical Academy, the Polytechnical Institute and the Forestry Institute. Although through the years the composition of the student body was democratised, there was a preponderance of the children of the nobility. Of all the students in St. Petersburg in 1910, 35.4 percent were from the nobility, 19.1 percent were children of honorary citizens and merchants, and only 10.4 percent were peasants. (Workers were classified as peasants in their passports). There were 150 secondary schools in 1914, including gymnasia and trade and commercial schools for men and women. In 1915 there were 16,000 male students in the secondary schools, 9,000 of whom were from the nobility.⁶ The statistics show that the poor were virtually excluded from educational opportunities.

4 *Rech'*, 11 February 1917.

5 GARF, f. DPOO, op. 5, d. 669 (1917 g.), 235.

6 Workers also carried the passports that classified them as peasants. For education in St. Petersburg, see Volk 1956, pp. 551–2, 561–2.

Sociological Geography of Petrograd

At first glance, Petrograd may appear to be a segregated city, where the privileged and the poor lived in separate living quarters. The nobility and the well-to-do lived in the centre of the city: the Admiralty, Kazan, Spasskaia, and Liteinaia districts, and the southern parts of Vasil'evskii Island and Petrograd District. The embankments of the Neva, Moika, Fontanka, and Ekaterininskii Canal were filled by the elegant houses of the grand dukes, nobles, and the wealthiest industrialists. The northern part of the Liteinaia District and streets leading to the Tauride Palace, the seat of the State Duma, were also known to be the exclusive residential districts of the privileged. The petty bureaucrats, merchants, and other lower middle class people preferred to live in the Moscow, Spasskaia, Kolomenskaia and Rozhdestvo districts and the outer areas of the Petrograd District, Vasilievskii Island. The two districts, the Petrograd and the Liteinaia, became a favourite residential area for the intelligentsia. The workers and artisans lived on the outskirts of the city – the Vyborg District, the outlying areas of the Petrograd District, and Vasil'evskii Island and the south end of the Obukhov Canal, particularly in the Narva and Petergof districts.

But this general characterisation that may convey the impression that the city was segregated by social classes and wealth does not convey a complex social mixture in almost all the districts of the city. The underdeveloped transport system of the city largely prevented long-distance daily migration of the population from residence to workplace. This meant a considerable social mixture in each district, where poor folks lived close to the most privileged and the well-to-do folks. Often the poor in the most privileged quarters of the city lived in the basement and attics of the same building where the upper layers of society resided. Conversely, many factory owners, their families, and the factory management personnel lived in the workers' quarters. This heterogeneity was a unique feature of Petrograd.⁷ Despite this qualification, however, it is possible to give a general contour of Petrograd by dividing the city into three general areas: the privileged centre, the working-class outlying areas, and the petty middle-class and artisanal middle.

Almost all large factories were located in these industrial sections of the city. The Vyborg District was the most developed industrial complex. Along the narrow strip surrounded by the Vyborg District's main boulevard, the Sampsonievskii Prospekt, and the Nevka Naberezhnaia, stood the gigantic metallurgical plants of New Lessner, Old Lessner, Erikson, Nobel, Baranovskii, and Par-

7 See Bater 1976, Chapter 7.

viainen. Along the Neva bank on the southeast, the Arsenal, the Cartridge Factory, the Petrograd Metal Factory, Promet, and Phoenix stood with their smokestacks. Other large plants were located in the northern part of the Petrograd District (Vulkan and Langenzippen), the eastern tip of Vasilievskii Island, known as the Harbour, or *Gavan'* (the Petrograd Cable Factory and the Baltic Shipyard), and its northern part (the Petrograd Pipe Factory). Another industrial complex was on the south side of the Obukhov Canal in the Narva District (Dinamo, Skorokhod, and Treugol'nik) and in the Petergof District, the outskirts just south of the city border, where the largest factory in Russia, the Putilov Factory, which employed more than 24,000 workers, was located. The Nevskii District just outside of the city limit on the southeastern edge along the Neva also included gigantic factories.⁸

Many artisans and small factory workers who worked in small workshops lived in the centre of the city on both sides of Sadovaia Street south of Nevskii Prospekt (parts of Spasskaia, Moscow, Kolomenskaia Districts), and in the Aleksandro-Nevskaia and Narva Districts. If Nevskii Prospekt was the street for the most privileged, Sadovaia Street south of the Nevskii Prospekt was for common folks. This was the commercial centre of the city's retail trades and markets. Along the street, there were six major retail markets, including the city's largest market, Sennaia or Haymarket, Apraksin, Aleksandrovskii, and New Aleksandrovskii markets – from where fruit and vegetables, fish and meat, and small manufactured goods were distributed to the city's various wholesale merchants and restaurants.⁹ Also the Nikol'skii Market at the Kriuchkov Canal was famous as the place to find seasonal day labourers. Day labourers, who came from the countryside, gathered under separate tents marked for stone-layers, stove-setters, navvies, gardeners, carpenters, and peddlers.¹⁰ Streets and side-streets that crossed Sadovaia were congested with workshops of artisans manufacturing objects from metal, leather, wood, and hemp. The artisans made clothes, utensils, shoes, boots, hats, lamps, furniture, and all other consumer goods. If Nevskii Prospekt was crowded with elegantly dressed pedestrians promenading and showing off their wealth and power, Sadovaia was always congested with poor folks, shouting, cursing, spitting, bargaining, bustling, running. There were many taverns [traktiry], soup-eating diners, beer halls, refreshment stalls [obzhornye riady]. The markets and streets teemed with

8 For the number of workers and the location of the factories in Petrograd 1917, the most reliable source is *Spisok fabrichno-zavodskikh predpriiatii*, 1918.

9 Iukhneva 1964, p. 122.

10 Iukhneva 1964, pp. 122–3.

panhandlers, prostitutes, the homeless, and beggars.¹¹ A major centre of vice in the city was around the Sennaia Square, where the Sennaia Market was located. This neighbourhood had undergone little change from the days of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Another rough spot in the city was the area called Ligovka, just north and south of the Nikolaevskii Railway Station (the southern tip of the Rozhdestvo District and the north-western corner of the Aleksandro-Nevskaia district), full of taverns, cheap apartment buildings, and houses of prostitution, where crime and violence were rampant. During the war the population of prostitutes increased four to five times, and the incidence of venereal disease reached epidemic proportions, particularly near the soldiers' barracks.¹²

No city in Europe displayed so glaringly the barriers between the privileged and the poor as Petrograd. The elegance and modern conveniences of its centre equalled those of any other city in Europe. The poor did not need to see the Winter Palace or the Iusupov Palace to be overwhelmed by wealth. Only a few minutes' walk to any fashionable street could evoke a sense of rejection from the beautifully ornamented walls of those houses. In the Admiralty and Kazan districts 90 percent of the dwellings were of stone, but on Vasil'evskii Island the stone buildings, including the factories, constituted only 29.4 percent, in the Vyborg District, 11.9 percent, and the Narva District, Novaia Derevnia and Okhta combined, only five percent. The crowding of the poor grew worse during the war with the sudden influx of people. It was not rare for ten to twenty persons to share a room. One source of statistical data tells us that only 18 persons out of 205 single workers slept in a single bed. Often an entire household had to sleep in one bed.¹³ But those who slept in a bed must have considered themselves fortunate, since many workers had to sleep on a bench in the corner of a room. The city's numerous doss-houses (*nochlezhnye doma*) provided beds for the homeless. Comparing these conditions with the letter written by the teacher who complained about the difficulty of finding a single room at a price within reach, one realises the difference between the two worlds.

In the centre of the city the streets were paved with cobblestones or asphalt and lit by elegantly ornamented street lamps powered by electricity or gas. Modern conveniences of electricity, gas, running water, flush toilets, door bells and telephones were made available for the households in that area. Public transportation by streetcar had been introduced at the turn of the century.

11 Iukhneva 1964, p. 123.

12 'Politicheskoe polozhenie' 1926, p. 8.

13 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 17, Kruze and Kutsentov 1956, pp. 132–3.

Automobiles were available by the time of the war, but they generally were used by officials or were the luxurious toys of the wealthy. Many still depended on horse-drawn carriages, and horse-drawn cabs busily weaved through the city's streets. But these modern conveniences did not extend to the workers' quarters. Streets there were generally not paved, and in the spring they turned into a sea of mud. No one on the outskirts enjoyed electricity or gas, but relied on kerosene lamps. Although the water station had been established in the 1890s, the city's water main did not extend to the workers' districts, which naturally contributed to frequent epidemics. Streetcars did not run in the workers' quarters.¹⁴ It was progress that widened the gap between the poor and the privileged, and implanted the dark resentment of those who could not share its fruits.

Administering the Capital

Administratively the capital was under the thumb of the *gradonachal'nik*, appointed by and directly responsible to the minister of internal affairs. The eyes and ears of the tsar, he controlled the police, the gendarmes, and the Okhrana, and served as the watchdog over the conduct of the municipal self-government, known as the city дума. After the outbreak of war, Petrograd was placed in the war theatre, and its security became the direct responsibility of the commander of the Petrograd Military District. The city's day-to-day functions were entrusted to the city дума, the members of which were chosen by electors who met property qualifications so high that only eleven to twelve thousand of the two and a half million residents were qualified to vote. The electors elected 150 city дума deputies, who in turn elected the city administration (*gorodskaiia uprava*) and the mayor (*golova*). The city administration was responsible for the use of land owned by the city, the running of city enterprises, sanitation, the organisation of public health, transportation, and the administration of schools, hospitals and welfare services (*popechitel'stvo*). Within the city дума there was a constant struggle between the conservative elements, which opposed the city's active participation in social services, and more progressive elements, led by the Kadets, which vigorously attempted to extend welfare, medical care, transportation, and other social services to the widest number of people. Despite constant harassment from the *gradonachal'nik*, and the obsolete municipal law, the city дума made some progress in

14 Petrov 1956, pp. 900–1.

providing services in the city.¹⁵ But progress was excruciatingly slow compared with the rising expectations of the common folks of the city.

Newspapers, Entertainment and City Life

By the time the Great War began, the commoners, including the poor, were no longer ignorant and illiterate. By 1913 eight out of ten Petersburgers could read and write, and millions of copies of cheap detective stories describing the adventures of Nat Pinkerton, Nick Carter and other detectives were sold for mass consumption. There were 555 newspapers and magazines published in the capital, and some of them, such as *Gazeta-Kopeika*, were especially popular among poor folks.¹⁶ Also a new form of entertainment reached the masses. By the end of 1913, there were 150 movie theatres in the city, and twenty three on the Nevskii Prospekt alone. Foreign films broadened the horizons of the masses and films about Russian themes taken from Russian novels introduced the masses to the Russian literary tradition. Bruce Lincoln writes:

Movies brought together, for the first time in history, all classes and all occupations. Students, policemen, workers, aristocrats, shopkeepers, priests, intellectuals, and beggars all found themselves on common ground in St. Petersburg movie theaters, if only for a moment. But the worlds of difference still stood between them once they left the magic world of the silver screen, for nowhere was the gulf that separated the upper classes from the working masses greater than in St. Petersburg.¹⁷

Excluded from participation in the decisions concerning their lives, cramped in stinking, dirty living quarters, always hungry and tired, the poor looked at the privileged with envy and resentment. Nor did the corrupt upper class set a fine example. 'Respectable' ladies flocked to Rasputin's apartment. His orgies, visible from the street through curtainless windows, provided an exciting spectacle.¹⁸ Yet Rasputin's frolics were but one sign of the decadence of the Russian ruling class. The poor envied them, but at the same time with righteous indignation condemned them.

15 For the inadequacies of the municipal law, see Hamm 1976, pp. 182–200.

16 Lincoln 2002, p. 214.

17 Ibid.

18 *Poslednii vremenshchik* 1964, p. 124.

Such was the Petrograd that was about to pass the halfway mark in the third year of the war. And as Blok's poem expressed, there stood in the city, as always, 'Night, a street, a lamp, and a chemists shop', with 'a meaningless and dim light'. There seemed to many, like Blok, 'no way out'.

The War and the Workers

Dangerous Class: Petrograd Workers during the War

Nothing was more dangerous to the tsarist regime than the political and social isolation of the working class. The Russian civil society was constructed on the privileged classes – the census (*tsenzovoi*) population. Despite some liberals' attempt to integrate the working class into civil society, this class was virtually excluded from it. The heavy concentration of workers in a few large cities, the preponderance of large factories, and the peculiar mixture of advanced technology with the backwardness of Russian industrial development all contributed to the explosive, destructive nature of the working class. If the workers met the outbreak of the war with silence, what many observers took to be their 'patriotism' soon transformed, with the military defeat and widespread rumours of the government's corruption and treason, to disillusionment and then to anger, as the cost of living increased sharply. The government's repressive policy, which eliminated practically all legal avenues of protest, drove them to radical action. By the end of 1916, the workers began to listen to the revolutionary agitators calling for the overthrow of the tsarist regime.¹

1 It is important to note that the term 'workers' is an ambiguous one. It usually excludes a vast number of non-industrial workers. A vast number of workers such as office clerks, employees in commercial establishments and service industries (restaurants, cafes, taverns, hotels and inns) are usually categorised as '*sluzhashchie*' and distinguished from 'workers'. A vast array of non-industrial workers in between, such as printers, longshoremen, transportation workers (tram drivers and cab drivers), construction workers, electricians, and dozens of other working professions needed for urban life usually escape from the analysis of the 'working class'. In addition, there was an enormous army of household servants. In Petrograd, there were more household servants than all factory workers combined. Furthermore, even if we limit ourselves to a definition of the workers as those who worked in factories and mills, there existed vast differences between their socio-economic conditions and their working-class consciousness in different industries, sizes of factories and mills, and skills required for their work. For instance, if we take a metal industry, we have large factories that employed more than 1,000 workers as well as numerous small workshops that employed fewer than 100 workers. Despite vast progress in historical literature on the Russian working class, it is still woefully inadequate in capturing the entirety of the working class.

Petrograd as the Industrial Centre of Russia

Petrograd was the largest industrial centre in Russia. At the beginning of 1917, it had 8.3 percent of the nation's factories, producing 22 percent of the total industrial output. At the beginning of 1914 the Petrograd workers numbered 242,600, or 9.1 percent of the total number of workers in Russia. In three years of war this number rose to 392,800, an increase of 62 percent. An additional 24,200 worked in neighbouring regions outside the capital, where such large plants as Izhora, Sestroretsk Weapons, and Shlissel'burg Gunpowder Factories were located. Altogether, Petrograd and its neighbouring regions had 417,000 workers or 11.9 percent of all the workers in Russia.²

The rapid expansion of Petrograd industry was closely connected with the war. By August 1916, 94 percent of the workers and 61 percent of the factories in Petrograd were engaged in military production.³ The war drastically changed the composition of the workers by trade. The number of metalworkers doubled to 237,400 or 60 percent of the total workforce in Petrograd. Although their proportion declined during the war, textile workers were the second largest group (44,100 or 11.2 percent). Third were chemical workers, who had increased by 86 percent, numbering 40,100 or 10.2 percent. Some sectors, however, experienced a decline in workforce. Especially the food processing industry shrank drastically, by more than 30 percent.

Another important effect of the war was the increased number of large factories. The average number of workers per factory rose from 536 in 1913 to 974 in 1917. At the beginning of 1917, 132 factories alone, comprising only 13 percent of the factories, employed 317,328 workers or 80.7 percent of the total workforce in Petrograd. The average number of workers per factory in this category was 2,404.⁴ The largest was the Putilov Factory, which employed more than 24,000, followed by the Petrograd Pipe Factory (19,046), Treugol'nik (15,338), Obukhov (10,600), Okhta Explosives (10,200), and the Petrograd Cartridge Factory (8,292). All were involved in war production and, with the exception of Treugol'nik, all were state-owned.⁵ It is important to note, however, that the totality of the composition of the workforce in Petrograd during the war is not available; hence we do not know the impact of the war on artisanal trades, com-

2 Leiberov 1972, p. 462; Stepanov 1965, pp. 25–6; McKean 1990, p. 327. Stepanov's figure of the total number of Petrograd workers is 385,000, about 7,000 smaller than Leiberov's and McKean's figure.

3 Leiberov 1972, p. 463.

4 Stepanov 1965, p. 32.

5 *Spisok fabrichno-zavodskikh predpriatii* 1918. The Putilov Factory was sequestered by the government in February 1916.

mercial establishments and service industries. Robert McKean, the author of an important work on St. Petersburg workers from 1905 to the February Revolution, cautions that if one were to take the entire working class in all sectors, 'the traditional view of the dominant position occupied by metal workers among the entire working population requires modification'.⁶ Undoubtedly, the number of metal workers increased, but their share of percentage of the total hired labour was much lower than 60 percent.

It should be noted that in the background of the revival of the workers' movement during the war, there was a tremendous expansion of Russian industry, particularly of those sectors connected with war production. This expansion created an acute labour shortage, especially of skilled metalworkers, and it was these metalworkers who participated most actively in the strike movement. They enjoyed relative security – in a labour market where they were in great demand, they could present their demands more forcefully than their comrades in other industries that did not share in the prosperity created by the war boom. Shortly after the beginning of the war, the government discontinued the practice of drafting skilled workers into the army, and those who had already been drafted gradually came back to the factories.⁷

It was not the privileged workers in the largest plants that stood at the vanguard of the radical workers' movement. In these factories wages and fringe benefits were much better than those in smaller factories and the government paid much closer attention both to the 'carrot' and the 'stick'. The most active participants in the strike movement during the war came from those metal manufacturing and machine-building factories in the Vyborg District that employed between 1,000 and 8,000 workers – New Lessner (6,500), Parvainen (7,300), Aivaz (4,000), Promet (3,000), Phoenix (1,940), Erikson (2,200), and Nobel (1,600). In the government-owned large munitions factories the workers tended to be older and had worked in the same plant for many years, while the workers in these Vyborg factories tended to be younger and the turnover rate was higher. It appears that the major impetus for the radicalisation of the Petrograd workers came from these highly skilled and confident young metalworkers whose economic benefits were much better than their fellow workers in other sectors in industry but not as good as the older, skilled workers in the large government plants. Also the size of these factories, not too big to preclude rapid communication among the workers nor so small as to be

6 McKean 1990, pp. 327–8, 335.

7 The number of former workers who were called back from the trenches to the factory benches was only 1,143. The repeated requests by the industrialists to recall the former workers drafted into the army to the factory were rejected by the Stavka. See McKean 1990, p. 321.

suppressed easily by the factory administration and police, contributed to the rapid mobilisation of the workers.

Geographically, almost 70 percent of the workers were employed in the industrial sections in the outer areas of the capital: Vyborg (18 percent), Vasil'evskii (14 percent), Nevskii (11 percent), Narva (10 percent), Petrograd (10 percent), and Petergof (9 percent).⁸ If we include Lesnoi and Poliustrovo, the two suburban districts adjoining the Vyborg District, almost 25 percent of Petrograd workers were concentrated in that region. An additional 20 percent were in the Narva-Petergof region. In these industrial districts the metalworkers were a majority, constituting 84 percent of the Vyborg workers, 73 percent of the Vasil'evskii workers, and 94 percent in the Petergof District.⁹ The heavy concentration of workers in the working-class district, segregated from other parts of the city, facilitated the consciousness of solidarity as well as of their own distinctiveness from other segments of society.

Change in the Composition of the Workers

The war changed the social and gender composition of the working class in Petrograd. According to Soviet-era historians I.P. Leiberov and O.I. Shkaratan, from 18 July 1914 to 1 October 1916, 40,000 industrial workers were taken from their benches and sent into the army. The number of workers, however, increased by 148,200 during the three years from 1914 to 1917. This means that there was an influx of approximately 180,000 workers into the ranks of industrial workers.¹⁰ The new workforce was supplied by peasants, women and children, refugees, soldiers and the middle class. Although no statistical data are available, Leiberov estimates that peasants constituted 50 to 75 percent of the newly recruited workers.¹¹ Compared with other cities, Petrograd workers remained the most urban of all workers in Russia in terms of maintaining land and households in the countryside.¹²

The second source of new labourers was women and children. The number of women increased in all sectors of industry. Women predominated in the

8 Nevskii District was an administrative district south of Aleksandro-Nevskaia District. It was also called Shlitsel'burg District and placed outside the city limits.

9 Stepanov 1965, p. 30. See Table 2, Hasegawa 1981, p. 77.

10 Leiberov and Shkaratan 1961, pp. 49–53; McKean 1990, p. 320.

11 Leiberov 1972, p. 467.

12 Stepanov 1965, p. 319. David Mandel supports this view. See Mandel 1983. For the counter-argument, see Smith 1983, p. 23; McKean 1990, p. 330.

textile industry prior to the war, constituting 57 percent of the total textile workers, but the proportion of women further increased during the war to 69 percent. In the food industry women supplied more than half the labour force. Even in the metal industry, where in peacetime there were only a small number of women workers (2.7 percent), the increase of women workers to more than one-fifth was remarkable.¹³ Children were mostly employed as unskilled workers. The increase in the number of women and children, however, did not lead to a corresponding decrease in the absolute number of adult male workers in Petrograd.¹⁴

Refugees were the third element of the growing workforce in Petrograd. As a result of the German occupation of the Baltic provinces and Poland in 1915, a large number of refugees (84,100 in December 1915, and 400,000 in February 1916) registered in Petrograd. It is estimated that 40,000 to 50,000 of these refugees were factory workers.¹⁵ The working soldiers were largely in the state munitions factories: there were 11,129 in the state factories under the Main Artillery Administration. According to the information supplied by the Petrograd Association of Factory Owners, 27,426 soldiers worked in the factories belonging to this organisation.¹⁶ A majority of these soldiers were workers who remained in the factories as soldiers after they were mobilised. They were under military discipline and could be punished by a military tribunal for participating in a strike. On the whole, in the state-owned munitions factories under the Main Artillery Administration, barrack-like discipline was enforced, and workers were under the constant surveillance of the officers of the guard regiments.

The middle class was another source of labour. Squeezed by the sharp rise in the cost of living, some members of this class had to find jobs in factories to support their families. Others chose to work in factories to avoid military service. Approximately 25,000 to 30,000 new recruits came from the middle class.¹⁷

The influx of the new labour force was important, because the relative weight of the original Petrograd workers from the pre-war period declined. As mentioned above, 40,000, or 17 percent, of the pre-war industrial workers were

13 McKean 1990, pp. 331–2. See Table 3, Hasegawa 1981, p. 79.

14 Stepanov 1965, pp. 34–6. See Table 4, Hasegawa 1981, p. 79. In Moscow Province the percentage of women workers increased from 25.2 to 37.7 percent during the war, and in all Russia from 26.6 percent to 43.2 percent, but the increase in Petrograd was from 25.7 percent to 33.7 percent.

15 Stepanov 1965, p. 42; McKean 1990, p. 329.

16 Ibid.; GARF, f. 150, op. 1, d. 207, ll. 94–6.

17 Shkaratan 1959, p. 24; Leiberov, 1972, p. 468; McKean 1990, pp. 329–30.

mobilised from July 1914 to October 1916. Although this figure was much smaller than the mobilisation figures in other cities, the removal of a proletarian core of such magnitude must have precipitated the decline of the strike movement immediately after the beginning of the war. Only 200,000 to 220,000 workers, or 50 to 52 percent of the total number of workers in Petrograd, remained in the factories during the war.¹⁸

Petrograd workers led the nation in literacy. The trade union census of 1918 indicated that the literacy rate of the Petrograd workers was 88.9 percent for men and 64.9 percent for women, compared with the national average of 79.2 percent for men and 44.2 percent for women. It was highest among the Petrograd metalworkers, whose literacy rate reached 92 percent for men and 70 percent for women.¹⁹

In her study of working-class youth in Moscow, Diane Koenker stresses the importance of education in the creation of an urban youth culture. In Petrograd as well as in Moscow the evening courses organised by progressive intelligentsia and cultural clubs in factories and the People's Houses became the most important gathering places for working-class youth. 'Familiarity with arts and literature', Koenker states, 'became an important symbol of status for the most advanced young workers, who could be distinguished by the writing desks and portraits of authors with which they furnished their rooms'.²⁰

Effects of the Change on the Workers' Movement

How did these changes in the composition of the working class in Petrograd affect the workers' movement? It should be emphasised that despite the significant additions, Petrograd workers remained the most urban, the most literate, and the least affected by the new influx of labour. More than half of the Petrograd workers during the war were those who had been working in the capital before the war began. To this core of the Petrograd proletariat were added the displaced proletarian evacuees from Poland and the Baltic provinces and a sizable number of urban youths who were growing into adulthood during the war. It seems certain that the revival of the labour movement came from this core of the proletariat; it was they who ensured the continuity of the radical tradition of the workers' movement.

18 Leiberov 1972, pp. 468–9; Leiberov and Shkaratan 1961, pp. 47–54; Stepanov 1965, p. 43.

19 Stepanov 1965, pp. 43, 45; McKean 1990, pp. 333–4.

20 Koenker 1978, p. 289.

But how did the influx of peasants, women and children influence the radicalism of the workers' movement? Haimson states that the influx of the uprooted peasants during the war contributed to the growing element of *buntarstvo*, a penchant for direct radical action. Koenker, on the other hand, argues that the newly arriving peasants, unfamiliar with urban life, retained much of their rural culture and had little contact with the established workers.²¹ It seems certain that the newly recruited peasants could not have been immediately mobilised into the strike movement. They had few skills to offer and thus could not work in the advanced factories from which the major impetus of the strike movement came. We still suffer woefully from the lack of any sociological study that examines the peasants' assimilation into urban life. It seems likely, however, that the very nature of urban experience – housing, transportation, factory life – gradually drew them closer to their fellow workers. Loosely organised *zemliachestva* (associations of countrymen), to which newly arriving peasants looked for help, might have lessened the shock of transition from rural to urban life. Some *zemliachestva* were used for the express purpose of politicising them. Having gone through the rapid social transformation in the village resulting from Stolypin's agrarian reform, which they resented, they may not have been far from comprehending the language of class warfare in the cities. The high cost of living, food shortages, crowded housing, long working hours – these new urban miseries must have made them embittered and resentful. They may not have been directly involved in the strike movement, but it is possible to argue that they constituted a reserve army of the more militant, politically conscious workers.

The war imposed a tremendous burden on working women, since the support of the family often fell on their shoulders, when husbands and fathers were sent to the front or were killed or wounded in the war. They worked long hours for a meagre salary, and then had to do the household chores when they returned home. Childcare was a problem. Some large factories established their own nurseries, and there was one cooperative day-care centre in the Vyborg District.²² The absence of mothers at home also contributed to a sharp rise in the number of crimes committed by minors, which rose from 1,860 in 1913 to 1,987 in 1914, 2,197 in 1915, and 3,301 in 1916, an increase of 77 percent.²³

It is also difficult to assess how the sudden surge in the number of women in the labour force affected the workers' movement. On the one hand, almost

21 Haimson 1965, p. 18; Koenker 1978, pp. 293, 301–2.

22 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 76–7.

23 RGIA, f. 1278, op. 1, d. 183, ll. 5–7; Ereshchekin 2005.

one-half of the women workers in Petrograd had simply continued work in factories they had worked in prior to the war, and among the new recruits were those who had previously worked and who had been forced by war to return to the factories. These women workers must have had some familiarity with the labour movement. On the other hand, despite the tremendous influx of female labour in Petrograd, women were predominantly employed in the industrial sectors that did not participate in the strike movement until the beginning of 1917.

Both Haimson and Koenker agree that the main source of radicalisation of the working class came from urban-born, working-class youths. Free from traditional family ties, thrust into adult life much earlier than their rural counterparts, and bound by a common educational background and a thirst for knowledge, the working-class youths created a uniquely urban youth culture. They had more skills, sophistication and knowledge than the new workers from the peasantry and as a result they gained access to relatively better paying jobs. They attended evening classes and joined drama and reading circles. Some even dressed like members of the educated upper class on occasion. But the more they aspired to share the treasures of the privileged class, the more painfully aware they became of the unbridgeable gap that separated them from those they wanted to imitate. Envy of the culture and wealth that the privileged class commanded and yet pride in their own class became the distinct features of their class consciousness. Urban youths, thus alienated, looked for a community to which they could belong. For some, evening classes and cultural clubs satisfied their sense of belonging, but for others participation in the underground revolutionary parties offered another outlet.²⁴

Deterioration of Wages and Working Conditions

The first factor that contributed to the revival of the workers' movement during the war was the deterioration of wages. Although the nominal wages of Petrograd workers were one and a half times higher than the national average, the difference was eaten up by inflation. The real wages of Petrograd workers in 1916 were 90 to 95 percent of the 1913 level, and by February 1917, they had dropped an additional 15 to 20 percent. These figures, however, do not reveal the wide fluctuation among various industries as well as between skilled and unskilled workers. Only in two industrial sectors, the metal and chemical industries, did

24 Koenker 1978, pp. 280–94, 301–2.

the real wages increase, by 20 and 13 percent respectively. In the food and textile industries, the wages were less than half of those of metalworkers. The phenomenal increase in the cost of living was directly responsible for the decline in real wages.

Leiberov and Shkaratan argue that there emerged during the war labour aristocrats who constituted the social basis for the moderate socialists. The data of wage distribution of New Lessner indicate the following monthly wages: 27 percent of all the workers received less than 60 rubles; 25 percent between 60 and 100 rubles; 20 percent between 100 and 140 rubles; 19 percent between 140 and 200 rubles; 5 percent between 200 and 240 rubles; and 4 percent more than 240 rubles. They estimate that about five to seven percent of Petrograd workers belonged to a labour aristocracy who earned more than 250 rubles a month.²⁵ It is not likely, however, that the amount of income inversely corresponded to the degree of participation in the strike movement. Young, skilled metalworkers, who constituted the core of the strike movement, may not have been the highest wage earners but they earned more than the average worker. Since we do not have any data on the wages of the artisanal workers and workers in trade and service industries, it is impossible to determine the aggregate wages of all hired workers. Nevertheless, as McKean states, 'the undoubted decline in real wages for most working people constituted the single most important factor behind the re-emergence of the strike movement from the summer of 1915'.²⁶

Also contributing to the rise of the strike movement were the long working hours. The average work day in the metal industry was eleven to twelve hours, and some of the textile and leather workers frequently worked more than twelve to thirteen hours a day. Some factories adopted a three-shift schedule without holidays. Overtime and Sunday working became compulsory in many factories.²⁷ This intensification of labour resulted in an increase of accidents and sickness to almost one and a half to twice the 1913 level. In 1915 factory inspectors found 1,372 violations of health and security regulations, but only ten factory owners were fined a total of 385 rubles. The neglect of security measures often led to tragic accidents. On 16 April 1915, an explosion in the Okhta Gunpowder Factory destroyed two workshops and eight neighbouring residential buildings, killing 110 persons and wounding 220 more. On 15 November 1915, poor ventilation of a workshop in Treugol'nik led to the poisoning of 39 women workers, along with symptoms of hysteria – shouting, crying, and

25 Leiberov and Shkaratan 1961, pp. 55–6.

26 McKean 1990, p. 339.

27 McKean 1990, pp. 325, 336.

laughter. Five days later another 11 workers were affected by poisonous gas in the same workshop. In October 1915, 50 anonymous workers of Langenzippen sent a petition to factory inspectors requesting intervention on their behalf to have two ventilation pipes installed in the workshop, since 'every worker complains of a headache' resulting from 'smoke and the smell of oil'. The factory management had refused their request, replying, 'You don't need such pipes. You will get cold, since heat will escape and the air is harmful to you anyway'.²⁸ There was a steep rise in sickness, many suffering from infectious diseases – typhus, scarlet fever, dysentery, and diphtheria.²⁹

Cost of Living and Housing

Factory workers endured a long working day under hazardous conditions, and they had little at home to provide ease or comfort. The crowded conditions in the workers' districts have already been mentioned. Because of the tremendous influx of new labour in Petrograd, the shortage of housing was acute – a situation that led the managements of large factories to build dormitories in the factory compounds. Rent skyrocketed. By the end of 1916 the average monthly rent had increased to twelve rubles, compared with three to four rubles before the war.³⁰ Many tenants unable to pay the rent were literally thrown out into the streets.

But the most important issue facing the workers in Petrograd after the summer of 1915 was that of the food supply. The amount of flour transported to Petrograd Province dropped from 65 million puds³¹ in 1914 to 57 million in 1916, and to 28.6 million in 1917, or 44 percent below the 1913 level.³² In the autumn of 1915, wheat flour, meat, sugar, and butter disappeared from the market, and

28 Leiberov 1972, pp. 472–3; Leiberov, 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 66, 72.

29 McKean 1990, p. 336.

30 See Chapter 4 and also *Krasnyi arkhiv* 17, no. 4 (1926): 11. It is interesting to note that the percentage of increase in population from 1910 to 1917 in the workers' districts such as the Vyborg District (54.2%) was not as high as the central districts such as Liteinyi (81.3%), and Petrograd District (69.3%). Even the central districts, Admiralty, Kazan, and Spasskaia combined, increased by 50.8%. One reason for the population increase in the Liteinaia District can be attributed to the existence of barracks. But the increase in the central districts may be caused by the increase in artisanal and service workers. McKean 1990, pp. 340–1.

31 1 pud is 40 funt, 16.38 kilograms and 36.11 pounds.

32 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 78; Leiberov, 1972, p. 474.

it became difficult to buy matches, soap, candles, and kerosene. Workers had to stand in long queues after work to buy a loaf of bread, and often by the time they got off work the bread had all been sold out. Black bread was a staple for workers. The cost of one and a half funts (1 funt = 0.90 lb) of black bread rose from 4.5 to 5.2 kopeiks. Thereafter, the price stabilised for a while until the spring of 1916, when it rose from 6.0 to 7.5 kopeiks in November, and then 9.0 kopeiks in January 1917. In October 1916 when prices were compared with those of 1913, rye and wheat flour went up by 243 percent and 269 percent, buckwheat by 320 percent, wheat by 308 percent, salt by 500 percent, butter by 845 percent, meat by 230 percent, sugar by 457 percent, and shoes and clothes by 400 to 500 percent.³³ In the autumn of 1915, food stores were open only twice or three times a week. Queues for food stores became common features in Petrograd, often 2,000 to 3,000 people standing in line. In March 1916, there was no bread in the working-class districts for days. The situation worsened at the turn of 1917.³⁴

The government relied almost exclusively on oppression to keep the workers in line. Trade unions were driven underground immediately after the outbreak of war. Workers' publications were closed down and their editors arrested. With the arrest of activists, the workers' sick-fund organisations were decimated. An Okhrana agent proudly reported: 'Until now in Petrograd there has been no work by trade unions, and the association of pharmacists is the only trade union functioning at the time of war'. Strikes were outlawed and strikers were punished with hard labour of four months to four years. On 2 September 1915, General A.P. Frolov, commander of the Petrograd Military District, issued a warning to workers that any participation in strikes would lead to a trial before a military tribunal and result in an indefinite period of exile.³⁵

These repressive measures did not stop the workers' strikes, which remained the only effective means to express grievances. When in the summer of 1915 the strike movement showed signs of revitalisation, the government discussed the possibility of militarising labour. On 2 August 1915, the minister of trade and industry presented a proposal to the Council of Ministers to place all industries engaged in war production under the jurisdiction of the war and naval ministries and to regulate workers by military discipline. The Council of Ministers, however, decided not to adopt this measure for fear that such militarisation of labour would provoke widespread protest.³⁶ But at the beginning of 1916,

33 Leiberov 1972, pp. 470–1; *Politicheskoe polozhenie*, 1926, p. 11.

34 McKean 1990, pp. 336–7, 345–6.

35 Fleer 1924, pp. 34–5, 43–4.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 46–7.

the Council of Ministers returned to the question of militarisation of labour. It decided to punish the strikers by sending them to the front. Altogether 6,000 strike leaders were mobilised into the army during the period between July 1915 and December 1916.³⁷ The government systematically used this punitive measure to discourage strikes, not realising that it was contributing to the spread of revolutionary sentiments in the army units.

Workers' Organisations

Despite police repression, Petrograd workers managed to maintain their legal and illegal networks of activities. During the war four types of legal organisations attempted to protect the workers' interests: insurance organisations, trade unions, workers' cooperatives, and cultural and educational clubs and circles.

The Insurance Law of 1912 gave the workers the right to establish sick-fund offices in factories, which in turn sent representatives to the provincial and city insurance councils. Although the insurance councils were made up mostly of representatives of the factory owners and were placed under the strict supervision of the minister of trade and industry, the workers were given a legal outlet through which they could protect their collective interests. From 1912 to 1914 the workers waged an insurance campaign, creating the workers' sick funds in factories, electing a workers' group in the Insurance Councils, and establishing a journal, *Voprosy strakhovaniia* (*Problems of Insurance*). The campaign was organised under the influence of the Bolsheviks, and *Voprosy strakhovaniia* became the Bolsheviks' legal journal.³⁸

After the outbreak of the war, the government closed down *Voprosy strakhovaniia* and arrested leading activists of the insurance movement. This did not completely eliminate all the insurance organisations. Although the workers' group in the Insurance Councils ceased to function, the sick funds at the factory level continued and provided the workers with their only viable legal organisation. Early in 1915 the activists in the sick-fund organisations began to reestablish contact with each other and by February the workers' insurance group began functioning and *Voprosy strakhovaniia* reappeared. This campaign was, as in the pre-war period, organised by the Bolsheviks, who again controlled the insurance journal and who used it to spread their influence among the Petrograd workers. Professional Bolshevik revolutionaries such as A.A. Andreev,

37 Leiberov and Shkaratan 1961, p. 53; Fleer 1924, p. 47; Balabanov 1927, pp. 392–3.

38 Falkova 1958, pp. 49–53.

S. Roshal', V.V. Kuibyshev, and M.I. Kalinin worked in the sick-fund organisations in various factories as 'experts' in insurance matters. To fill the eleven positions vacated by the arrested representatives in the fifteen-member workers' group of the Insurance Council, the activists launched an election campaign from December 1915 through January 1916. The result was an overwhelming victory for the Bolsheviks, who elected ten, conceding only one to the Mensheviks. The Okhrana, with good reason, regarded the insurance organisations as 'Social Democratic reserve battalions', and relentlessly persecuted the activists. From August 1914 to December 1916 the government conducted seventy-seven 'search and destroy' operations in the sick-fund organisations. Since by the autumn of 1916 four of the workers' representatives had been arrested and only two remained, another election was held in October 1916. The Bolsheviks took four of the five new seats.³⁹

The workers' insurance movement provided workers with their legal organisational base and activists in the sick funds strove to achieve maximum protection for the workers, as provided by the Law of 1912. Although shackled by the government's censorship, they managed to publish a legal journal, which addressed itself, in between the censored blank pages, to the workers' economic issues. The Bolsheviks, who led the insurance campaign during the war, took advantage of every opportunity to spread their political slogans through insurance activities. By the end of 1916 there existed in Petrograd eighty sick-fund organisations, which recruited more than 176,000 members, about 45 per cent of the total number of Petrograd workers.⁴⁰

Another organisation the workers attempted to restore during the war was the trade unions. The workers repeatedly petitioned the government for permission to restore legal unions. Fifteen different trades presented such petitions between December 1914 and February 1917, but only five were permitted, and after August 1916 no new trade unions were allowed. During the war until February 1917, there existed in Petrograd eleven underground workers' trade unions and three legal non-proletarian trade unions (clerks in printing plants, pharmacists, and doormen). Even the largest, the Union of Metalworkers, had only 4,000 members out of a total of 237,400 metalworkers, and its functioning was constantly hampered by factional struggles between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks for control.⁴¹ The rest of the trade unions organised a few hundred workers at most and, in general, their illegal existence made

39 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 415–17, 436; Falkova 1958, p. 63.

40 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 413.

41 Ibid., pp. 436–9; 444–5.

them almost meaningless. The activists therefore preferred to spend their energy in other legal outlets.

The never-ending inflation forced the development of another type of legal organisation: the workers' cooperatives. The first was established in November 1915, through the joint efforts of the factory owners (Old Lessner, Erikson, Nobel, and Phoenix) in the Vyborg District and the Menshevik leaders (Gvozdev, Breido, and a police spy, Abrasimov). The main task of the cooperatives was to purchase food and other essential items and distribute them at low prices to the consumers. In less than a year eleven workers' cooperatives sprang up in various parts of the city and succeeded in recruiting 11,000 members, and by February 1917 there were twenty-three cooperatives with 50,000 members.⁴² If the insurance movement developed under the influence of the Bolsheviks, the cooperative movement was led by the moderate Mensheviks, who controlled *Trud*, the legal journal devoted to the cooperative movement. In April 1916 the Petrograd Union of Consumers' Associations was formed as a coordinating centre of all the workers' cooperatives in Petrograd. The cooperative movement, however, did not remain merely an economic organisation. The Mensheviks used the cooperatives as a point of contact between the workers' movement and the liberal opposition, as well as a basis to expand their influence among the wide masses of workers. In the beginning of 1916, an Okhrana agent reported: 'The revolutionary-minded elements are attempting to use the cooperatives ... exclusively as a form of legal possibility'.⁴³

Another network for the workers' movement comprised the cultural clubs and circles in factories and evening classes organised by liberal philanthropic activists at the People's Houses. In many large factories there were semi-legal cultural clubs and reading circles. The reading materials and discussions in these clubs were avowedly political and designed to inculcate class consciousness among the masses of workers. They served also as centres for underground activists to recruit fellow travellers and were often used illegally as gathering places for strike organisers to plan strategy. It is not known how many such clubs and circles existed or how many workers participated, but their role in providing activists with a meeting place was not insignificant.

42 RGIA, f. 150, op. 1, d. 673, ll. 63–4; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 460; McKean 1990, p. 346.

43 Quoted in Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 457–66.

Strike Movement: August–September 1915

As McKean states, 'During the war the strike movement in Petrograd remained the monarchy's most visible source of opposition'.⁴⁴ Initially, the strike movement quickly subsided immediately after the outbreak of war. On 19 July 1914, responding to the mobilisation, the hard core of the workers' movement, around 27,000 in number from the large metal manufactories in the Vyborg District, staged a demonstration against the war, but they were quickly chased away by mounted police. Another contingent of about fifty demonstrators boldly marched on Nevskii Prospekt only to be attacked by angry patriotic crowds. These two demonstrations were the last resonance of the strike movement that had climaxed in the general strike two weeks before the war. After that, the strike movement was moribund until the summer of 1915.

While 110,000 workers had struck on 9 January 1914, the anniversary of Bloody Sunday, only 2,600 workers celebrated the traditional day of protest in 1915. When the Bolshevik Duma deputies were arrested in November 1914, no strikes occurred; and when they were brought to trial in February 1916, strikes were organised only in six factories, involving 340 workers.⁴⁵ The war had two

44 McKean 1990, p. 425.

45 Leiberov's study is based on an enormous number of archival sources. Since I did not have access to all the archives that Leiberov used, I have no way of verifying the accuracy of his statistics. Statistics of strikes were compiled basically by four organisations: (1) the Factory Inspectorate, which excluded the factories under the jurisdiction of the war and naval ministries; (2) the military authority and the Special Council for Defence, which recorded only those in the war industry under defence contract; (3) the Petrograd Association of Factory Owners, which recorded only those that happened in the factories of the association members; and (4) the Okhrana and police departments. In order to understand the strike figures during the war, one must be aware of three factors. First, the distinction between political and economic strikes was somewhat arbitrary. Demands for higher wages and improvement of working conditions were classified as economic, and there were obvious cases where the strikes were motivated politically, like the protest strikes in reaction to the Ivanovo massacre. But between these clear-cut cases there were many strikes that could not be easily classified one way or the other. Second, the report of the number of strikers was not really reliable. Some reported the precise figure to the last digit, but others were rough estimates such as 1,000 or 2,000 workers; in some cases the reported strike participants even surpassed the total number of workers employed in the particular factory. Therefore, what we are concerned about in the statistics of the number of strikers is not precise figures, but rather its general trend. Third, if the number of strikers cannot be precisely estimated, the number of strikes seems to be more accurate. There is no reason to believe that these agencies would falsify information as

psychological effects on the workers. First, patriotic fervour had seized a small segment of workers in Petrograd. To the consternation of the veteran underground revolutionaries, these workers marched at the head of the patriotic demonstrations singing 'God Save the Tsar'. 'Our class struggle', lamented one of the Bolshevik activists, 'went down the drain'. Second, there was pervasive fear among the workers that they might be drafted into the army. 'The workers clung to the lathe, as a drowning man grabs a straw, in order to stay in the factory'.⁴⁶

The defeat of the Russian army in the spring and summer of 1915, however, drastically changed the workers' mood. On 4 July 1915, more than 1,500 workers of New Lessner went on strike for higher wages, thus signalling a new wave in the strike movement. Within a week the strike spread to other factories, including the Putilov Shipyard, Neva Shipyard, and Erikson. In the last two factories, the underground revolutionary activists, including the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks, and the SRS, formed illegal strike committees. The sudden increase in strikes alarmed the authorities. On 12 July, all the members of the strike committee of Neva Shipyard and 103 strikers of Erikson who refused to return to work were arrested by the police.⁴⁷

On 10 August the police fired on the textile workers in Ivanovo-Voznesensk (Vladimir province), who struck and demonstrated, killing thirty and wounding fifty-three. On 17 August, when the news reached Petrograd, the workers at Aivaz Factory struck. In the following two days the strike spread to large factories in the Vyborg, Narva, and Petergof districts, involving 22,500 workers in twenty-three factories, all in protest of the Ivanovo massacre. The political strikes in August coincided with the rise of economic strikes. For the first time since 19 July 1914, the strikers clashed with the police, and some cases of vandalism of food stores were reported. In Mozhaiskaia Street near the barracks of the Semenovskii Regiment, a crowd of women, joined by the newly recruited

to whether a strike occurred in one factory. Therefore, the most accurate index of the basic trend of the strike movement during the war is the combined total of the number of economic and political strikes. The data compiled by Leiberov are the most detailed to date.

46 Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, pp. 145, 285–87; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 96; 'Podpol'naia rabota' 1922, p. 130; Kondrat'ev 1923a, p. 229. Whether the workers supported the war or responded to it with hostility is a controversial topic. Carefully examining both sides, McKean states: 'at the very least there was no large-scale overt opposition to war among the mass of factory and artisanal hands ... There was certainly passive acceptance of the war'. McKean 1990, p. 358.

47 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 104–6.

soldiers of the Eger Regiment, attacked the police and wounded twenty policemen. Military police had to be brought in to restore order.⁴⁸

The authorities reacted to the strike movement in August swiftly. From 29 August to 2 September the police arrested underground revolutionaries and activists in the insurance movement. In the Putilov Factory alone thirty workers were arrested, including twenty-three Bolsheviks (five of whom were members of the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee), six Socialist Revolutionaries, and one Menshevik.⁴⁹ The mass arrest provoked a city-wide general strike. On 2 September, more than 6,000 workers in the Putilov Factory struck. Workers from seven different Putilov workshops assembled in the factory courtyard and passed a resolution, calling for the recall of Bolshevik deputies from exile, the release of the arrested Putilov workers, the establishment of a responsible ministry, drafting of policemen into the army, and a 15 percent increase in wages. They also protested the threatened prorogation of the Duma. The contents of the resolution had strong Menshevik overtones. In response to the Putilov strike, an All-City Strike Committee was hastily created by the activists of various underground party organisations. It appealed to workers of other factories to support the Putilov strike and to create a soviet of workers' deputies. The Petrograd workers responded with a four-day strike, involving a total of 82,700 workers from seventy factories.⁵⁰

It is important to note that the All-City Strike Committee endorsed the idea of the creation of a soviet of workers' deputies, which had played a dominant role in leading the workers' strike movement in St. Petersburg in the 1905 Revolution. Where the initiative to create a soviet originated during the September strike is not clear, but the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee as well as the Mensheviks supported the idea. In the absence of a viable workers' organisation that could coordinate the strike and assume effective leadership over the workers' movement in the entire city, it was not surprising to see the revival of the notion of the soviet among activists, some of whom must have participated in the struggle during the 1905 Revolution. Leiberov claims workers in the Putilov Factory began electing their deputies to the soviet on 2 September, and that on the following day an election was held in a number of Vyborg factories.⁵¹

48 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1058, ll. 43–47; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 108–11; Leiberov 1972, pp. 483–4.

49 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1058, ll. 43–47; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1: 108–11; Leiberov 1972, pp. 483–4.

50 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1058, 61–3, 68–71, 75–6; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 115; Leiberov 1972, p. 485; Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, pp. 336–46.

51 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 113, 115–116.

The general strike, however, revealed wide differences among leaders of the workers' movement. The socialist deputies in the Duma were afraid that a workers' movement beyond their control would frighten the fragile coalition of the Progressive Bloc away from active political struggle against the government. Thus Skobelev, Chkheidze and Kerenskii went around to the factories and attempted to persuade the striking workers to return to work. On the evening of 5 September, the enlarged meeting of the All-City Strike Committee discussed whether to continue the strike. The left socialist leaders who had organised the strike were divided: the Menshevik-Internationalists and the Bolsheviks advocated the continuation of the strike, while the Mezhrainsy and the SRS insisted on ending the strike.⁵²

The sudden revival of the workers' strike movement in Petrograd coincided with the defeat of the Russian army and the political crisis involving the government's relationship with the Duma. The three-day strikes from 17 through 19 August, however, took place in direct response to the Ivanovo massacre. There is no evidence to indicate that the workers were concerned with the fate of the Russian army in the battlefield or that they had demonstrated their sympathy with the just formed Progressive Bloc. The proletarian solidarity and their utter indifference to the conflict between the government and the liberal opposition were indicative of the course that the labour movement was to take in the future.⁵³

The second wave of the strike movement from the end of August to the beginning of September coincided with the prorogation of the Duma. But the government's repressive measure against the liberals was not a major factor – the movement was initiated as a protest against the arrest of the Putilov workers. Although the resolution adopted by the Putilov workers contains a protest against the prorogation of the Duma and a demand for the formation of a responsible ministry, the Okhrana reports describing in detail the four-day strike contain no other mention of the Duma.⁵⁴ It appears, therefore, that just as the three-day strike in August was in reaction to the Ivanovo massacre, the four-day strike in September was in reaction to the police arrest of the Putilov strikers. The workers' strike movement during the war had a distinct class nature. It developed independently of the liberal opposition and its struggle with the government. There was little in common between the liberals and the workers' movement, and Miliukov, Maklakov and other moderate liberals who

52 Ibid., p. 120; Melancon 1990, p. 89.

53 Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, pp. 329–31.

54 Ibid., pp. 336–44.

feared the workers' strike movement more than the government's repression had a good reason for their foreboding apprehension.

Strike Movement in 1916

Although political strikes sharply declined after the September strike, economic strikes sustained the new level achieved in July 1915. Economic strikes never surpassed ten a month between July 1914 and June 1915, but they fluctuated between thirteen and twenty-nine from July through December 1915. The workers not only demanded higher wages but also reinstitution of factory elders, the rehiring of fired workers, better working conditions (ranging from installation of a new ventilation system to repairing of the roof and providing soap in the toilets) and polite treatment of workers by the management. It is significant also that many textile factories that had not been involved in political strikes participated in economic strikes in the latter half of 1915. Also in the autumn of 1915, Petrograd workers were involved in lively discussions concerning the election of the workers' representatives to the Central War Industries Committee.⁵⁵

The change in mood of the workers that had developed within a year was vividly manifested in the traditional 9 January strikes in 1915 and 1916: only 2,600 workers at fourteen factories struck on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday in 1915, but more than 61,000 at 68 factories joined the strike in 1916. These figures are all the more remarkable if one considers that the moderate Mensheviks and the Workers' Group of the Central War Industries Committee opposed the strike on the grounds that the workers were not sufficiently united to strike decisively. On this day the workers displayed greater militancy than earlier in confronting the police. Unlike the year before, there was a small demonstration in the Vyborg District. As the demonstrators met on Sampsonievskii Prospekt with the police, a military truck transporting soldiers drove into the mounted police who were attacking the demonstrators. The crowd cheered the incident.⁵⁶

The February–March 1916 Strikes

The strike movement peaked again in February and March 1916. On February 4, 2,230 workers of the electrical workshop of the Putilov Factory struck,

55 Ibid., pp. 369–88. See Chapter 6.

56 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 142–4; Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, pp. 396–406.

demanding an increase in wages of 70 percent. Their economic strike was immediately exploited by underground activists – the Bolshevik collectives, which numbered eighty to a hundred in the Putilov Factory, in cooperation with the SRS, the Mezhraiontsy and the radical wing of the Mensheviks, decided to expand the strike to the entire factory. A mass rally was held in the factory courtyard, where the Bolshevik and Mezhraionka orators made fiery speeches appealing to the workers to support the electrical workers. The strike expanded to three other workshops, involving more than 5,800 workers. On 6 February, the factory administration shut down the factory and announced that workers who did not return to work would be immediately fired. The strike leaders met at the sick-fund office and decided to appeal to the other factories to support the Putilov strike. Bolshevik worker I. Egorov, a member of the Petersburg Committee, was dispatched to the Vyborg District to coordinate the workers' offensive between the Putilov strike and the Vyborg District. The rank-and-file workers in the Putilov Factory, however, were disturbed by the takeover of the strike movement by professional revolutionaries. Frightened by the possibility of losing their jobs, and induced by the administration's partial concessions to their demands, the workers returned to work on 10 February. The general strike that the Bolshevik activists hoped to generate did not materialise.⁵⁷

But the management's concession – a 3 to 28 percent wage increase for those who earned less than 100 rubles a month – did not satisfy the Putilov workers. On 18 February, the workers in the new-shell workshop struck with the demand for a wage increase of 70 percent. The strike quickly spread to other workshops. On 22 February, the administration resorted to a lockout for the second time and fired the strikers. More than 2,000 Putilov strikers were ordered to report to military service. On 29 February, the Special Council for Defence decided to sequester the Putilov Factory into the government's artillery administration. This drastic measure provoked an immediate reaction from the Vyborg workers and on 29 February the workers of New Lessner, Baranovskii, Nobel and Parviainen staged a sympathy strike. The Bolshevik and the SR Petersburg Committees jointly called for a city-wide general strike. On the next three days, 1 to 3 March, the major factories in Petrograd went on strike, involving 73,000 workers at forty-nine factories. But the Menshevik Initiative Group and the Mezhraiontsy – and even the anarchists – did not join the SR-Bolshevik joint call for a general strike.⁵⁸

57 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1060, l. 84; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 144–7; Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, pp. 431–40.

58 Balabanov 1927, p. 375; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 150; Leiberov 1972, pp. 494–6; Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, pp. 441–52; Melancon 1990, p. 109.

But the New Lessner strike flared up in two weeks. On 17 March, 650 workers of the instrument and small-shell workshops of New Lessner went on strike and demanded a wage increase of 10 to 60 percent. On the following two days 1,950 workers from other workshops joined the strike, demanding a wage increase, polite treatment and better sanitary conditions. A five-member strike committee was established under the leadership of a Bolshevik, N.V. Kopylov, and on 21 March the entire factory struck. The administration resorted to a lockout, and fired all the strikers, of whom about six hundred were drafted into the army.⁵⁹ The defeat of the New Lessner strike was costly, since most politically active workers, including all the Bolsheviks, were driven out of the factory. With its defeat, the February–March 1916 strike movement came to an end.

Revival of Strike Movement in Autumn 1916

The worsening food supply situation in the autumn of 1916 was a major cause for the revival of the strike movement. The workers' anger with inflation and the food shortage reached such a point that usually moderate leaders of the Workers' Group in the Central War Industries Committee admitted that 'one provocation would be sufficient to ignite a disorder in the capital which might result in sacrifices in the thousands and tens of thousands'.⁶⁰ If the Workers' Group concluded from this that the leaders of the workers' movement should exercise restraint, the Bolsheviks and the radical wing of the Socialist Revolutionary Party attempted to exploit the food crisis for the general struggle against the tsarist regime.

At the beginning of October, the Petersburg Committee of the Bolshevik party instructed the party workers to 'demonstrate to the masses that the problem of the cost of living increase is closely related to the struggle for a democratic republic and the end of the war'.⁶¹ In various factories, such as Phoenix, New Lessner and Erikson, groups of workers had held meetings since to discuss the problems of inflation and the food shortage. Some of the workers attempted to stage a demonstration in the main streets only to be chased away by the police. This tremor led to a sudden eruption on 17 October, when even to the surprise of the radical activists, the workers of Parviainen, Russian Renault, and New Lessner went on strike, and staged a demonstration along Sampsonievskii Prospekt.

59 Leiborov 1972, pp. 498–9.

60 Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, p. 483.

61 Listovki 1939, vol. 2, p. 222.

When the demonstrators approached the barracks of the 181st Infantry Regiment where a crowd of soldiers sympathetically watched the workers' demonstration through the barracks fences, the police attacked the demonstrators. This angered the soldiers, who threw rocks and bricks at the police. Shouting, 'Beat the police', the soldiers jumped over and crawled under the barrack fences and joined the demonstrators. The demonstrators surrounded the outnumbered police and took away their sabres and revolvers. It was only after the Cossacks and the training detachment of the Moscow Regiment arrived on the scene that order was restored. According to one of the soldiers who took part in the demonstration, A. Ivanov, former Bolshevik worker in the Putilov Factory, there were in the 181st Infantry Regiment many former strike participants, like himself, who continued political agitation in the military units. The military authorities later arrested 130 soldiers, and the 181st Infantry Regiment was removed from Petrograd. By the end of the day, 27,300 workers from ten factories had participated in the strike in the Vyborg District. On the following day, 18 October, the strike spread to 46,300 workers at thirty-four factories in the Vyborg, Petrograd, Vasil'evskaia and Moscow districts, and on 19 October to 75,400 workers at 63 factories in all parts of the city.⁶²

The three-day strike was followed by another wave of strikes at the end of October. These strikes were purely political, called by the Bolsheviks. The Petersburg Committee decided to appeal to the workers to stage a political strike against the trial of the Bolshevik sailors in the Baltic Fleet who had been arrested because of their revolutionary activities, and against the arrest of the soldiers of the 181st Infantry Regiment. On 26 October, the opening day of the trial, 25,800 workers at thirteen factories participated in the strike; it spread to 52,500 workers at forty-seven factories on 27 October, and on the third day to 79,100 workers at 77 factories.⁶³ If one remembers that the Petersburg Committee's strike call for the trial of the arrested Bolshevik Duma deputies attracted only 340 workers at six factories in February 1915, the strike figures in the second half of October clearly demonstrate the increased radicalisation of the Petrograd workers and the growing influence of the Bolsheviks. This in turn triggered the radicalisation of the Workers' Group, which, aware of their slipping influence, tried to recover the lost ground.

After October, the strike movement subsided. Such was the inevitable aftermath of every explosion of labour unrest. The leaders had been arrested, the networks of communication and organisation were broken, and the workers

62 Ivanov 1924, p. 172. Also see Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, pp. 490–3; Leiberov 1972, p. 501.

63 GARF, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1060, ll. 87–90; Leiberov 1972, p. 502.

needed time to recover from the emotional strain. Those who had been fired needed to find other jobs, often by disguising their identities. Nevertheless, the ebb of the workers' movement in November and December 1916 did not mean that the workers became apathetic and inactive. Strikes subsided, but sporadic attacks on food stores became rampant. When the strike movement picked up momentum again in January 1917, it was to engulf a wider segment of the Petrograd workers, and eventually to develop into a revolution.

Characteristics of the Strike Movement during the War

The most distinct characteristic of the strike movement in Petrograd during the war was the predominance of the metal workers.⁶⁴ In terms of strike participation, Petrograd workers can be divided into four groups. The vanguard of the strike movement were the metalworkers of the Vyborg District in such factories as Aivaz, Baranovskii, Nobel, Promet, Parviainen, New Lessner, Phoenix and Erikson. These workers were the backbone of every major strike during the war.⁶⁵ The second group consisted of workers whose participation was primarily limited to economic strikes, although some of them sporadically joined the political strikes. Three distinctly different workers belonged to this group. The first sub-group were the workers of the largest and state-owned munitions factories: Neva Shipyard, Obukhov, Petrograd Metal, Putilov, Franco-Russian, Baltic Shipyard and Putilov Shipyard. But other munitions factories such as Arsenal, Petrograd Cartridge, Orudinskii, Cable, Admiralty Shipyard, Okhta Explosives and Okhta Gunpowder were involved in no strikes during the war. The second sub-group were workers of metal processing/machine manufacturing factories engaged in weapon production in such factories as Rozenkrantz, Langenzippen, Siemens-Schuckert and others. The third sub-group were textile workers. Altogether 100,000 workers of this group persistently fought for economic gains, but they were not always active supporters of political strikes. In particular, textile workers did not join political strikes until the beginning of 1917.

The third category comprised workers of factories who struck once or twice during the war, but on the whole remained inactive. This group includes 16,300 metalworkers, 9,300 textile workers, 2,200 in paper manufacturing, 1,100 wood

64 McKean 1990, p. 407.

65 The number of workers, description of products and geographical locations are given in Spisok 1918.

processors, 17,900 in leather and shoe manufacturing, 4,700 food and tobacco processors, 1,800 chemical workers and 1,000 others – altogether 54,300 workers. The total of these three categories was 187,400. Since these figures represent all the workers of the struck factories, not separating the number of striking workers, and therefore have an obvious upward bias, the actual number of participants in strikes is presumed to be much smaller. Even this inflated figure is only 47.7 percent of the total factory workers in Petrograd in January 1917. Thus more than half of the Petrograd factory workers remained in the fourth category, those who never struck during the war. Furthermore, we can assume that the vast army of artisanal workers, employees in commercial establishments and service industries did not participate in strikes.

There is no reason to believe, however, that the silent majority of these workers accepted their misery meekly. The general trend of the strike movement clearly indicates that the movement led by the vanguard of the metalworkers was gradually drawing in the cautious workers of the largest factories as well as the less organised sector of the working class. The political and economic strikes that had developed differently throughout 1915 and in the beginning of 1916 had shown a trend to merge into one in late 1916.

The examination of the workers' strike movement during the war demonstrates that the working class in Petrograd was claiming its own place in society, aiming not to be integrated into the existing civil society, but rather to replace it. Together with the workers' demands on practical issues such as increases in wages and improvement of working conditions, they demanded 'polite treatment'. In other words, at the root of the workers' movement, there was a demand to be treated with dignity that was not accorded in the existing society. The workers therefore stood at the forefront of the revolt of the *nizy* – the lower strata of society – against the *verkhi*, the existing society as a whole.

The War and the Revolutionary Parties

The War Splits the Revolutionary Parties

The workers' movement during the war did not develop in a vacuum. It always interacted with the revolutionary parties, which attempted to steer it in the direction they wanted. And some of the activists involved in the workers' movement were members or sympathisers of the revolutionary parties.

The war had a profound impact on the revolutionary parties. At its outbreak, the connections between their leaders in exile and the underground revolutionary party organisations were cut off. Many of their underground party activists were arrested and exiled, their organisations destroyed, and their legal and illegal publications suppressed. Countless arrests and 'search and destroy' missions by the police demoralised the activists. Moreover, all the revolutionary parties were seriously divided by differences about the war and attitude toward the liberal oppositions.

In general the socialists split into three groups with regard to their position on the war. The first, the 'defencists', saw the war as resulting from German aggression and argued that the duty of the proletariat was to defeat German militarism and defend the nation against aggression. Gergii Plekhanov, father of Russian Marxism, was the most famous revolutionary to take this position. Another variant of defencists were similar to the European socialists in France and Belgium, who defended the war as the defensive war against 'autocratic' Germany, but took the position that in order to defend the country, the overthrow of the tsarist regime was also necessary to align Russian with democratic allies of Britain and France.

At the opposite pole was the 'defeatists'. Led by Lenin, the 'defeatists' took the position that the defeat of Russia would serve as the prelude to world-wide socialist revolution. The task of the proletariat was to turn the imperialist war into the civil war against capitalism. Furthermore, Lenin considered the collapse of the Second International a betrayal of the cause of the international socialist movement, and called for the establishment of the Third International, completely breaking with the 'social chauvinists' who supported the war.

Other socialists identified themselves as the 'internationalists'. The internationalists cut across party lines, including the Menshevik Organisational Committee led by Iulii O. Martov and the Socialist Revolutionaries led by Viktor

Chernov. Although there were many differences among them, they in general opposed the war, and regarded it as detrimental to the interests of the working class. Thus, they stood for peace 'without annexations and indemnities'.

Related to the war issue, but ultimately more important in dividing the revolutionary parties, was the method of struggle against the regime. With the exception of a small group of ultra-defencists, most revolutionaries stood for the continuation of a struggle to overthrow tsarism. While many defencists believed that this struggle should be waged jointly with the liberal forces, the left-wing internationalists rejected cooperation with the 'bourgeoisie'.¹

The split cut across party lines, and during the war a gradual realignment of revolutionary groups occurred. In Petrograd, the anti-war groups formed a loose coalition and engaged in activities in opposition to the government as well as to the liberals. The moderate socialists, on the other hand, sought joint actions between the workers and the liberals against the tsarist regime. Two groups competed with each other for control of the workers' movement in Petrograd. It is important to note that the sharp ideological divisions among the exiled leaders did not have much influence on the activists on the ground, who acted on their own, often in defiance of their leaders in exile, to carry on their activities and form their alliances.

Initial Reactions to the War: Bolsheviks

Bolsheviks vs Mensheviks

The Russian Socialist Democratic Labour party was split into the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks at the Second Party Congress in 1903. While the Mensheviks, led by Martov, advocated the formation of an open mass party, Lenin insisted that the revolutionary party should be composed of a handful of dedicated, closely knit, conspiratorial revolutionaries, since the workers themselves, without the guidance of these revolutionaries, would never develop a proletarian consciousness.

On the matter of revolutionary strategy the Mensheviks believed that Russia must pass through the historically preordained stages from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to socialism, with two separate revolutions when history jumped from one stage to the next. The first revolution should

1 For the impact of the war on the socialist parties in Russia, see Fainsod, 1935, pp. 45 ff.; McKean 1990, pp. 351-5.

be a bourgeois-democratic revolution, in which the bourgeoisie would play the leading role. Only when material conditions became ripe and other democratic reforms were accomplished under capitalism could a socialist revolution be carried out by the proletariat. Lenin argued that a bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia would be possible only under the hegemony of the proletariat in cooperation with the peasantry. The Russian bourgeoisie, owing to the backwardness of its development, would be incapable of fulfilling the historical task of carrying out its own revolution. The Mensheviks maintained that the proletariat and the Marxist party should abstain from participating in a bourgeois government. In contrast, Lenin advocated the formation of a provisional revolutionary government led by the proletariat. Only such a government could ensure the convocation of a truly democratic Constituent Assembly, which was to become a vehicle of a bourgeois-democratic revolution.

The War Destroys the Bolsheviks

The Bolshevik Party gained considerable influence among Petrograd workers two years prior to the war. Its membership rose from 600 in 1910 to 6,000 in 1914.² But war dealt a severe blow to the Bolshevik party. Lenin was arrested by the Austrian authorities and exiled to Switzerland, from where it became virtually impossible to keep close contact with the party organisations in Russia. All the legal Bolshevik publications were suppressed. After the July strike, the authorities arrested more than 1,500 Bolshevik activists, and dragooned them into the army at the first mobilisation. The leaders in the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee and the Petersburg Committee were deported from the capital. Finally, in early November, the Bolshevik Duma deputies were arrested and charged with treason. The membership of the party in Petrograd shrank to 100 immediately after the outbreak of the war.³

More importantly, the war brought confusion among the party activists. On 26 July, the Bolshevik Duma deputies, together with the Mensheviks, walked out of the Duma session during the discussion on war credits, but in a joint statement subscribed to the position that the proletariat had the obligation to defend the culture threatened by the external enemy. This was clearly against the defeatist position advocated by Lenin. Many intellectuals, such as the left-wing lawyer N.D. Sokolov, who was to play an important role during the February Revolution, disagreed with Lenin's position, and left the party. In

2 The membership for 1910 is given in Kruze 1976, p. 79; that of 1914 is given by Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 35.

3 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 80.

November, the Bolshevik leaders in Russia, including Lev Kamenev, editor of the newspaper *Pravda*, and four Bolshevik Duma deputies held a conference in Ozerki outside Petrograd, but maintained the defencist position against Lenin. After their arrest they were brought to trial, but during the trial in February 1915, all were quick to denounce Lenin's defeatism.⁴

The Bolshevik worker activists took a more militant position. The Petersburg Committee maintained its name throughout the war in protest against the war and the renaming of the capital as the more Russian sounding 'Petrograd'. Workers memoirs in the 1920s – and the Soviet-era historians who relied on them – gave a picture that it was the rank-and-file activists who accepted Lenin's radical position against their leaders. 'Lenin's theses', A. Kondrat'ev stated, 'gave us a fresh spirit, vindicated and inspired us, fired our hearts with an irresistible desire to go further'.⁵ Kondrat'ev's memoirs, however, as well as those of other Bolshevik activists, must be taken with a grain of salt. It may be true that the rank-and-file Bolshevik activists took an anti-war stand, but whether they shared Lenin's defeatism and his sectarian denunciations of fellow socialists is an open question. As McKean shows on the basis of his analysis of forty-seven leaflets and appeals published illegally by Bolshevik activists from between January 1915 and 22 February 1917, not a single leaflet advocated Russia's defeat, and almost all illegal pamphlets refrained from denouncing the Mensheviks and SRs as 'social chauvinists' who betrayed the cause of the proletariat.⁶

It should be remembered that the Bolshevik party during the war was not a monolithic, top-down bureaucratic organisation. The central leadership could not and did not extend a strong control over the local organisations. The Russian Bureau of the Central Committee did not exist for most of the time during the war, and when it finally came into existence, it was too weak and its means too limited to assume effective leadership. The Petersburg Committee assumed virtual leadership over the Bolshevik organisations in Petrograd, but its members were subject to constant police repression, and the turnover rate of its membership was high. Thus, most of the day-to-day operations were left to the discretion of the local organisations. The rank-and-file activists freely exchanged opinions, unafraid of challenging directives from the centre. And yet their influence among the workers remained minimal.⁷ The party

4 Tiutiukin 1972, pp. 20–1, 30–4, 45–7; Krestinskii 1924, pp. 50–60, Samoilov 1954, pp. 272, 276; Dvinov 1962, pp. 38–9; Baevskii in Pokrovskii 1927, vol. 1: p. 353; McKean 1990, pp. 358–62.

5 Kondrat'ev 1922a, p. 236.

6 McKean 1990, pp. 361–2.

7 See Podpol'naia rabota 1922, pp. 116–43.

membership did not exceed 500. According to McKean, 'the endeavours of the Bolshevik sub-élite to respond to political developments met with resounding failure'.⁸

The War Divides the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries

The outbreak of the war had an even more adverse effect on the Mensheviks. Of their troika of leaders, Martov was in Paris, Fedor I. Dan was arrested on the first day of the war and exiled to Siberia, and only A.N. Potresov remained in Petrograd. While the Bolsheviks were more or less united in their anti-war stance and refusal to collaborate with the bourgeoisie, the Mensheviks became hopelessly divided on the issue of war and their attitude toward the bourgeoisie.⁹

The Defencists

Georgii Plekhanov, father of Russian Marxism, advanced the most blatant defencist position.¹⁰ His position, however, did not receive much support among the Mensheviks in Russia. It was Potresov's group that provided the intellectual force for a defencist position vastly different from Plekhanov's. Potresov argued that as long as the war was imposed on the Russian proletariat by Germany, it would be the obligation of the proletariat to defend itself. But unlike Plekhanov, Potresov saw tsarism as a major obstacle to victory and thought that the proletariat should, therefore, join with the bourgeoisie in a common struggle to overthrow the tsarist regime.¹¹ In the beginning of 1916 those Mensheviks who stood for this position published a collection of articles, *Samozashchita* (Self-Defence), which elaborated on the major defencist positions.¹²

8 McKean 1990, pp. 368–70. For more exaggerated claims of the restoration of the Petersburg Committee and its activities, see Kondrat'ev 1922a, pp. 32, 36–7; Fleer 1926, pp. 112–18. See also Egorov 1926, no. 3, pp. 5–29; no. 4, pp. 68–92; Leiberov 1970, vol. 1, pp. 97–8 and Tiutiukin 1972, p. 42.

9 Ermanskii 1927, p. 121; Tiutiukin 1972, p. 51.

10 Tiutiukin 1972, p. 57. For Plekhanov's position also see Dvinov 1962, pp. 30–2, 68–79.

11 For Potresov and the *samozashchita* group, see Dvinov 1962, pp. 168–74; Linde in Haimson 1974, pp. 6–7.

12 Such Menshevik intellectual luminaries as Potresov, E.V. Maevskii, B.O. Bogdanov, F.A. Cherevanin and P.P. Maslov belonged to this group. Kuz'ma Gvozdev, head of the Workers' Group (described later in this chapter), also joined the *Samozashchita* group.

Centrists and the Duma Faction

The Menshevik's leading centre, the Organisational Committee, led by Martov, rejected both Plekhanov and Potresov. Its secretariat abroad considered either kind of defencism a betrayal of the international solidarity of the proletariat. They stood for peace without annexations and indemnities, and joined the anti-war international socialist conferences held in Zimmerwald and Kienthal.

After the arrest of the Bolshevik deputies of the Duma, the Menshevik Duma faction around N.S. Chkhaidze and M.I. Skobelev (often in collaboration with Trudovik A.F. Kerenskii) became the only group in the Duma that represented the interests of the working class. Both Chkhaidze and Skobelev considered themselves internationalists and viewed the war as an imperialist struggle between imperialist nations. Thus, at the outbreak of war, the Menshevik Duma deputies, in cooperation with the Bolsheviks, issued a joint declaration and walked out without voting for the war credits. Unlike Martov's unequivocal advocacy of proletarian internationalism, however, they advocated defence of the cultural heritage and of the interests of the working class against external aggression.¹³ Thus, the Duma faction took a similar position to that of the *Samozashchita* group.

Like Potresov, the Duma faction also saw the necessity of waging a struggle against the tsarist government. In conformity with their theoretical understanding of the Marxist law of history, they viewed this struggle as one leading to a bourgeois-democratic revolution, in which the bourgeoisie should play a dominant role. They encouraged the liberals to join in the struggle and often attempted to restrain the workers from taking action that might frighten the liberal opposition.¹⁴

The Initiative Group

The left wing of the Mensheviks was represented by the Initiative Group whose position was close to Martov's internationalism. Like Lenin they took the position that the war was caused by imperialist competition, and considered the victory of Germany as well as the Entente detrimental to the cause of the proletariat. But they rejected Lenin's defeatism, opposed Lenin's sectarian idea of the creation of the Third International and advocated the return of the Second

13 Tiutiukin 1972, pp. 59–61. A.F. Burianov, I.N. Makov and A.I. Chkhenskeli supported Plekhanov's defencist position. V.I. Khaustov took a position similar to Potresov's revolutionary defencism. Chkhaidze, Skobelev and I.N. Tuliakov stood for internationalism similar to Martov's position. *Ibid.*, pp. 363–4.

14 Dvinov 1962, p. 60.

International. Unlike Potresov and other defencists, they rejected any cooperation with the bourgeoisie.¹⁵

The Mezhrainontsy between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks

A small organisation called Mezhraionka – their members, Mezhraiontsy – was a creation of I. Iurenev (Konstantin Konstantinovich Kortovskii), who was influenced mostly by Lev Trotskii's ideas. They stood for the reunification of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks on the basis of anti-war internationalism. At the outbreak of war, this group issued a leaflet with a slogan against the war and for the overthrow of the tsarist regime. They took a militant anti-war stance, although they did not support Lenin's defeatism. Like the Menshevik Initiative Group, they were adamantly opposed to any collaboration with the bourgeoisie.¹⁶ In the first six months after the war, the Mezhraiontsy turned out to be the most active revolutionary underground organisation. Their cells functioned in the major factories in the Vasil'evskii Island and in the Petrograd Side. The Mezhraiontsy were especially active in propaganda work in the army. By the end of 1914, the Mezhraionka had about 300 to 350 followers, largely drawn from among students, metalworkers and printers. Their activities, however, drew the attention of the police, and in February 1915, police repression almost wiped out the organisation.¹⁷

The War Also Divides the Socialist Revolutionaries

The Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRs) had rejected Marxism and inherited the traditional *narodniki* (Populist) revolutionary ideology. The war caused a serious split in the party. At the outbreak of the war, the famous terrorist Boris Savinkov took a defencist position similar to Plekhanov's.¹⁸ On 22 August 1914, at Beaugy, a small town near Lausanne, Switzerland, the Socialist Revolutionary party leaders abroad held a conference to discuss their policy toward the war. The conference revealed a serious internal split. A majority led by N.D. Avksent'ev and I.I. Bunakov took a defencist position, while a small minority led by Viktor M. Chernov, the party's founder, advocated the internationalist position.¹⁹ Inside Russia also, a majority of the SR organisations took the defencist position. This position, however, was sharply criticised by a small group of rad-

15 McKean 1990, p. 364.

16 McKean 1990, pp. 364–5.

17 Iurenev 1924, pp. 115–17, 123–5, 127–36; Popov 1923, p. 96; McKean 1990, pp. 373–4; Melancon 1990, pp. 172–3.

18 Tiutiukin 1972, pp. 67–8.

19 Ibid., p. 72; Melancon 1990, pp. 18–31.

ical internationalists in the party. In late August and early September 1914, a serious conflict took place between the remaining Petersburg Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary party and radical anti-war activists. At the beginning of September about one hundred SR workers held a meeting outside the Neva Gate and adopted a resolution, warning the party leaders that if they took no action against the war, the SR workers would join the Bolshevik party.²⁰ According to Michael Melancon, A.F. Kerenskii played a unique role in the SR party. Kerenskii, a deputy to the Fourth Duma representing the Trudoviki, a Duma faction that was virtually a SR affiliate, initially took an internationalist position.²¹ But he was an ardent believer in a united front between the working class and the liberals. His fiery speeches at the Duma sessions, attacking the government and adjuring his liberal colleagues to join the common struggle against autocracy, were often silenced by the Duma Chairman, Rodzianko. A key leader of the Freemasons, which will be discussed in Chapter 10, Kerenskii provided a major link with the radical wing of the liberals and the socialist intelligentsia. The 'Information Bureau' was one of his efforts to establish through his Masonic ties a loose network with the liberal and socialist leaders.²²

Challenging the prevailing view that the SRS played a minimal role in the anti-war campaign, Melancon argues that 'during the first half-year of the world war the Petrograd SRS surpassed the other socialist parties in the scope and liveliness of their endeavors'.²³ It is difficult, however, to gauge the relative influence of various groups of the left-wing socialists on the workers.

The Realignment of the Revolutionary Parties

The war divided the revolutionary parties into the defencists and the internationalists, cutting across party lines. As McKean states, Plekhanov's radical defencism and Lenin's defeatism 'found little sympathy and much hostility'. The defencist position, with varied differences, took the view that the socialists and the working class should support the war against Germany, while they advocated continuing struggle against the monarchy in cooperation with the liberal opposition. The Bolsheviks, the Menshevik Initiative Group, Mezhrayontsy, and the left-wing SR activists gradually formed a loose coalition against the war and the government, rejecting cooperation with the liberals.

20 Tiutiukin 1972, p. 74; Kaiurov 1930, p. 93; Melancon 1990, p. 63.

21 Melancon 1990, pp. 64–5.

22 The organisation is mentioned in McKean but without any reference to the Masonic ties. McKean 1990, p. 372.

23 Melancon 1990, pp. 66–7.

The deteriorating living and working conditions of the working class provided a fertile soil for the radical wing of the revolutionary parties.²⁴

The Upsurge of the Strike Movement, and a Call for a Soviet: The Summer 1915

The sudden revitalisation of the strike movement, touched off by the Ivanovo massacre, raised the hopes of the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee as well as the radical SR activists. By this time, the Bolshevik party organisations were reconstructed when the veteran underground revolutionaries such as V.V. Schmidt and V.N. Zalezhskii returned to the capital. Mistaking the sudden upsurge of the strike movement as a prelude to revolution, the Bolsheviks adopted a militant policy at the meeting on 22 and 23 August, calling for a general strike, armed attacks on the police and organisation of a soviet of workers' deputies.²⁵ The upsurge of the strike movement also activated the radical SR activists. The SRs and the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee held a joint conference to coordinate the programme to capitalise on the favourable conditions for the strike movement.²⁶

The militant stand of the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee and the radical SRs alarmed the police. Fully informed of the new tendency of the Bolsheviks' Petersburg Committee by the police spy Chernomazov, a secretary of the New Lessner sick-fund organisation and a militant member of the Petersburg Committee, the police conducted large-scale arrests of the strike activists at the end of August and the beginning of September, including five members of the Petersburg Committee, as well as the SRs and the Mensheviks. The police raids of the sick funds of the Putilov Factory touched off a Putilov strike, and this led to strikes in other factories over the next four days, as discussed in the previous chapter. While Kerenskii, Chkheidze, Skobelev and other Duma deputies went around factories urging the workers not to strike so that the ill-timed strikes should not jeopardise the movement against tsarism, all the left-wing socialists, including the Bolsheviks, the radical SRs, Menshevik Initiative Group, and Mezhraiontsy were unanimous in attempting to turn the Putilov strike into a general strike, and created an all-city strike committee. The strike committee

²⁴ McKean 1990, pp. 365–6.

²⁵ Other members who returned from exile included Litvinov, Z. Endin, S. Orlov, and S. Bogdat'ev. Zalezhskii 1937, pp. 124–5. See also Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 111–12.

²⁶ Melancon 1990, p. 88.

also called for the creation of a soviet of workers' deputies and it was reported that in some factories workers began electing their representatives to such a soviet. The establishment of the soviet did not materialise, however, since the strike movement did not develop into a general strike.²⁷ The united front of the left socialists turned out to be ephemeral. After a few days the radical left socialist leadership in the strike committee became divided. The Bolsheviks and the Initiative Group insisted on the continuation of the strike, but the Mezhraiontsy and the SRS favoured ending the strike.²⁸ The ill-timed militancy urged by the Bolsheviks and other left-wing socialists ended in a fiasco.

The left socialists were not alone, however, in proposing the creation of a soviet of workers' deputies. According to McKean, Kerenskii and Chkheidze convened meetings with groups of workers. At this meeting they 'recommended the establishment of factory collectives as nuclei of a future soviet in a struggle for a Constituent Assembly'.²⁹ It is important to note that already in the summer of 1915 two competing ideas of a soviet – one as a separate workers' organisation to lead a strike movement and another as a vehicle to achieve a national organisation inclusive of all classes – were floated by two competing groups, predicting the future contested issues when the Petrograd Soviet was created during the February Revolution.

Formation of the Workers' Group

The Bolsheviks Scored the Initial Victory

Guchkov and Konovalov had proposed the participation of workers' representatives in the War Industries Committees and managed to have the Council of Ministers approve of this move. At first, they had appealed to the workers' group of the Insurance Council to send delegates, but the Insurance Council, under Bolshevik influence, had rejected their request. The leaders of the Central War Industries Committee then appealed directly to the factory workers to elect representatives. In this attempt they had the full support of a wide spectrum of Mensheviks except for the Menshevik exile leaders led by Martov. The strong opponents of the workers' participation in the War Industries Committee were

27 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 116–17; Leiberov 1972, p. 486; McKean 1990, 376. Lenin criticised the Petersburg Committee's slogan for the creation of the soviet as premature. According to Lenin, the slogan for the soviet should be raised only in connection with an insurrection. McKean 1990, p. 378.

28 Melancon 1990, p. 89; McKean 1990, p. 378.

29 McKean 1990, p. 376.

the Bolsheviks. As for the SRS, the right SRS supported participation, while the left SR internationalists opposed it.³⁰

During August and September an election campaign was launched in major factories in Petrograd, and lively discussions went on in a series of meetings. The election was to be conducted in two stages. First, workers were to choose electors on the basis of one for every 1,000 workers for those factories with more than 1,000 workers and one for each factory with 500 to 1,000 workers. Then the electors were to select ten delegates for the Central War Industries Committee and six for the Petrograd District Committee.³¹

The Bolsheviks strongly opposed the participation of workers' representatives in the 'bourgeois' organisation. But the Petersburg Committee decided to take full advantage of the election campaign to propagate their anti-war stand and revolutionary slogans among the workers. At the end of August, the Petersburg Committee decided to participate in the election of electors to expose the moderate Mensheviks' collaboration with the bourgeoisie, but not to participate in the War Industries Committee. It adopted the 'instructions' (*nakaz*) drafted by S.Ia. Bogdat'ev, which stated the following positions: (1) participation in the War Industries Committee would betray the will of the proletariat and revolutionary internationalism; (2) the electors should boycott such participation; and (3) at the appropriate moment, the electors should declare themselves a soviet of workers' deputies.³² During the next several weeks the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks were involved in lively debate at the factories, uniquely free of police harassment, to gain the support of the workers. By 21 September 1915, pre-election meetings had been held at 93 of the 101 eligible factories, and 218 electors representing 213,000 workers had been elected. Of these electors, 60 to 70 were Bolsheviks, approximately 80 were Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries favouring participation, and about 60 took a neutral, intermediate position.³³

When the electors finally met on 27 September to decide whether the workers should send their delegates to the War Industries Committees, the Bolsheviks scored a brilliant strategic victory. Two veteran professional revolutionaries, Bogdat'ev and Zalezhsii, smuggled themselves into the meeting, falsifying the mandates of two electors from the Putilov Factory without their knowledge, and spearheaded the Bolshevik attack on the advocates of participation.

30 McKean 1990, pp. 381–2; Melancon 1990, pp. 92–3.

31 Zalezhsii 1931, pp. 130–1; McKean 1990, p. 382.

32 Tiutiukin 1972, p. 209. RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1059, ll. 3–5; *Rabochee dvizhenie* 1958, pp. 348–50.

33 Zalezhsii 1931, p. 134; McKean 1990, pp. 382–3; Melancon 1990, pp. 94–5.

Zalezhskii made a fiery speech against the war and against collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Apparently the Mensheviks, comfortable with their numerical strength, were not prepared for such an attack. According to the Okhrana report, the left-wing Socialist Revolutionaries, who had remained neutral, were swayed to the Bolshevik position. At the end of the meeting there were 95 votes for the Bolshevik resolution rejecting participation in the War Industries Committees and 81 against it.³⁴

The victory of the Bolsheviks at the 27 September meeting, however, should not be taken as an accurate measure of their strength among the Petrograd workers. The outcome was obviously influenced by the highly charged atmosphere in the aftermath of the Ivanovo massacre and the September strike as well as the workers' innate distrust of the employers' organisation. Numerically, the moderate Mensheviks gained more votes than the Bolsheviks in the electors' election. Also, elections at the factory level were so confused that in some factories workers elected Menshevik electors with the Bolshevik instructions.³⁵

The Menshevik Defencists Strike Back

After this unexpected defeat, the Mensheviks immediately struck back. Kuz'ma Gvozdev, a metalworker from Erikson and a Menshevik defencist, complained in an open letter to the workers that the Bolsheviks had violated a democratic electoral process by sending two pretenders to the meeting. Gvozdev's protest was obviously supported by the leaders of the Central War Industries Committee, and a second meeting was organised on 29 November.

By this time the strike movement had declined sharply and some of the Bolshevik electors had been arrested. So the Bolsheviks changed their strategy. After the meeting opened, the Bolshevik electors read a four-point declaration reiterating that participation in the War Industries Committee would be tantamount to betrayal of the working class, and then they walked out. The Socialist-Revolutionary delegates followed suit. According to the Okhrana report, of the 213 electors only 153 attended the meeting, and as a result of the walkout, only 74 remained at the meeting – hardly enough to make a quorum. But after Guchkov made a credentials check it was reported, rather miracu-

34 Zalezhskii 1931, pp. 135–7; according to an Okhrana report, the vote was 90 for and 81 against. RGIA, f. 1450, op. 530, d. 1058, ll. 18–19, 21–2. See also McKean 1990, pp. 383–4; Melancon 1990, p. 95.

35 Siegelbaum, 'Class Collaboration', p. 7; Tiutiukin 1972, p. 211. Zalezhskii admits that during the election campaign the Bolsheviks suffered a shortage of good speakers who could compete with the Mensheviks. Thus the Bolsheviks concentrated only on large factories. Zalezhskii 1931, p. 133; McKean 1990, pp. 382–3; Melancon 1990, p. 93.

lously, that 109 electors were present.³⁶ The Bolsheviks were not the only ones who manipulated the electoral process.

Many Mensheviks spoke in support of participation in the War Industries Committee, but the meeting was not without further excitement. A Bolshevik who remained at the meeting, A.I. Dunaev, viciously attacked the Menshevik leadership for collaborating with a factory owner, Guchkov. 'Instead of appealing to the workers, you went to Guchkov', sarcastically remarked Dunaev, 'and today you drink his tea and tomorrow eat his sandwiches'. This speech caused uproar. Electors jumped up and shouted obscenities at Dunaev, demanding that he be kicked out. Gvozdev ordered him to stop speaking and warned that a further outburst would force him to call the guards to remove him. Dunaev left the rostrum with a mocking smile, saying: 'I am leaving, since I now see whom I am dealing with here. You would appeal to someone in the Okhrana or the police. By cooperating with Guchkov, you have come thus far to benefit from this'.³⁷ In the eyes of the workers, the picture of some of their representatives silencing another with the aid of the police must not have been reassuring. After all the speakers had finished, the election of the representatives to the War Industries Committee was held, but not before eight more Socialist Revolutionaries walked out. Finally, ten delegates were elected to the Central War Industries Committee and six to the Petrograd District Committee. The Workers' Group thus came into existence.

As Lewis Siegelbaum has said, this was certainly a Pyrrhic victory for the Workers' Group. The Bolsheviks' relentless campaign against them – unfairly labelling them 'Gvozdevites', as 'renegades' and 'class collaborators' – did them much damage.³⁸

The Bolsheviks' Failed Militancy: Autumn 1915 to the End of 1916

Failures of the October and November Strikes

Although in the end the Bolshevik campaign to boycott the election to the War Industries Committees proved unsuccessful, they took fullest advantage of the freedom for propaganda purposes. During the campaign the party grew

36 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1059, l. 79.

37 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1059, l. 82.

38 Siegelbaum, 'Class Collaboration', p. 8. Also see Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, p. 363. In some factories, presumably under the influence of Bolshevik activists, workers held meetings protesting the election of the Workers' Group. In Erikson and New Lessner the workers passed a resolution urging their electors to withdraw from the Workers' Group and threat-

in membership and extended its underground network. By the autumn of 1915, the membership of the party, which had dwindled to 100 immediately after the war, rose to 1,200.³⁹ But as soon as they regained some strength, they displayed the same penchant for radical actions to their detriment.

In October the Bolsheviks attempted to exploit the popular discontent caused by the food crisis to create 'food commissions' in factories in the Moscow, Narva, Petrograd, and Vyborg districts, but when on 19 October, 2,000 workers at Phoenix struck, it decided to call for a general strike. Met with opposition from the radical SRs and Mensheviks, however, the Bolsheviks were forced to call off their plan.⁴⁰ A similar pattern took place in November, the Bolshevik activists, responding to 'Instructions to Party Workers', written by a veteran party activist, Bogdat'ev, sought to use economic demands as a springboard for a general strike. They converted existing secret 'food commissions' into strike committees and created a General City Strike Committee, which they hoped to develop into a soviet. In this action, both the Bolsheviks and SR-Internationalists collaborated. But when New Lessner workers struck, the Bolsheviks again jumped the gun, calling for a general strike, ending up with the failure of not only a general strike, but also the New Lessner strike.⁴¹

9 January Strikes and Demonstrations

After the fiasco of the New Lessner strike, the Petrograd Bolsheviks concentrated on preparations for the strike of 9 January 1916. For this the SR-Internationalists also collaborated with the Bolsheviks (see below). Since the Workers' Group opposed a strike on this anniversary of Bloody Sunday, it became the first test of the relative strength of the Workers' Group and the Bolsheviks-SR Internationalists among the Petrograd workers. Each Bolshevik district committee was instructed to create an organisational collegium under reliable leaders of the district committee by drawing its members from various party organisa-

ening that, if they refused, they would be carted out of the factory in wheelbarrows – one of the most humiliating punishments meted out to offenders of working-class interests.

39 By the autumn of 1915 the Petersburg Committee controlled eight city district committees and four neighbouring regional committees (Sestroretsk, Kolpino, Shlissel'burg, and Kronstadt). In the middle of September, A.G. Shliapnikov arrived from Sweden on Lenin's instructions, and by the middle of November had succeeded in restoring the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee, but it exerted little influence on the activists on the ground and ceased its existence when in March 1916 its members were arrested. Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 132. Also see Shliapnikov 1923b, pp. 92–4, 182–3; Dazhina 1968, pp. 277–80.

40 McKean 1990, p. 379.

41 Ibid.

tions in the district. According to the Okhrana report, the collegia served the Bolsheviks as propaganda centres as well as training schools for new organisers.⁴² The Petersburg Committee itself was preparing one leaflet urging the workers to stage a demonstration and strike on 9 January to protest the war and another leaflet specifically directed at the soldiers. However, at the end of December most of the members of the Petersburg Committee were arrested by the police when they were meeting in a restaurant in the Petrograd District.⁴³ Despite this setback, on 9 January 1916, over 61,000 workers in 68 factories joined the strike – impressive evidence of the Bolsheviks/SR-Internationalists' growing influence among Petrograd workers, although no demonstrations took place, as the Bolsheviks had hoped.

Failure of the February–March Strikes 1916

The Bolsheviks, however, overextended themselves again in the Putilov strike in February and the city-wide strike that followed in March.⁴⁴ After the costly defeat of the strike at the end of March, the most important of the Bolshevik organisations in Petrograd was well-nigh destroyed. After May the Petersburg Committee ceased its illegal printing activities.⁴⁵ It was not until October 1916 that the Petrograd Bolsheviks became active again in propaganda activities among the workers.

When the food supply problem became acute in the autumn of 1916, the Petersburg Committee instructed party activists to exploit this crisis for a new revolutionary offensive. The October strike, directly caused by the workers' dissatisfaction over the shortage of food and the never-ending rise in the cost of living, went far beyond the Bolsheviks' expectations, and developed into the largest political strike in Petrograd during the war. Taking advantage of this situation, the Bolsheviks attempted to stage a purely political strike in support of Bolshevik sailors in the Baltic Fleet, who were brought to trial, and the trial of the soldiers of the 181st Infantry Regiment who had joined the demonstration and had been arrested by military authorities. Responding to the Bolsheviks'

42 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1059, l. 102.

43 The militancy of the Bolsheviks was illustrated by their call for armed resistance to the police. 'We will defend ourselves' became the party's slogan, and for this purpose the party organisation in Old Lessner acquired 80 Browning rifles. In the Petrograd Metal Factory an illegal strike committee was created, and it was decided that this committee would consider itself a 'fighting detachment'. Ibid., II. 103–7; McKean 1990, p. 385.

44 For the Putilov strike and the Bolsheviks, see McKean 1990, pp. 386–7.

45 *Listovki Peterburgskikh bol'shevikov* has only one leaflet published between May and October 1916. See *Listovki* 1939, vol. 2, pp. 218–30.

call, the workers staged a three-day strike, involving almost 80,000 workers on the third day. The October strike proved two things. First, given the combination of the right timing and a careful choice of slogans, the Bolsheviks were capable of mobilising the masses of workers. Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that workers by and large came to accept the Bolshevik platform. An Okhrana report stated that although the masses of workers reacted to the food shortage and inflation, the Bolsheviks had a hard time gaining support for their Social Democratic slogans.⁴⁶ Also it proved the unpredictability of the workers' movement. By October 1916 the workers were desperate, but the activists had no way of knowing when and how their mood could be translated into action.

According to Leiberov, the membership of the party dropped to between 100 and 120 in the period from July to December 1914; it rose to 1,200 by the end of 1915, then to 2,000 by September 1916; and on the eve of the February Revolution it numbered 3,000. The number of party cells rose from 55 in February 1915, to 109 in September and October 1915, and to 110 in January 1917.⁴⁷ Because of constant police harassment, which led to the frequent breakups of the Petersburg Committee, it was the district committees that often directed the day-to-day operation of the party. Of these district committees, the Vyborg District Committee (500 to 600 members) and the Petergof-Narva District Committee (800) were the most important. Another curious fact of the Vyborg District Committee was the large majority of its members who had been connected through the *zemliachestvo* (association of countrymen) of Sormovo and Nizhnii Novgorod. Since many of the Bolshevik activists were skilled metalworkers who had fought in the 1905 Revolution in Sormovo, and later in the upsurge of the labour movement after 1912 in Sormovo and Nizhnii Novgorod, the *zemliachestvo* immediately became the stronghold of militant Bolshevik activists. Five members of the *zemliachestvo* belonged to the Vyborg District Committee and three to the Petersburg Committee. In other words, the Sormovo *zemliachestvo* became the unofficial inner circle of the Bolshevik underground leadership. Not only did it camouflage their illegal gatherings, but it also provided the Bolsheviks with the best defence against infiltration by police agents.⁴⁸

46 Politicheskoe polozhenie 1926, pp. 27–8; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 337–8.

47 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 339; 'Iz proshlogo Leningradskoi organistsii' 1931, pp. 33–5. It was in some factories in the Vyborg District that Bolshevik strength lay: New Lessner (80 to 100), Rozenkrantz (80), Parviainen (50), Old Lessner (30 to 40), Russian-Baltic Aeronautics (30), Petrograd Metal Factory (15 to 20), Erikson (15), and Promet (15).

48 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 342–3; Gordienko 1957, pp. 44–6; White 1979, pp. 475–88.

Police repression was the most serious threat to Bolshevik organisations. According to Leiberov's study, from 19 July 1914 to 15 February 1917, the police arrested 743 Bolsheviks, 553 nonparty activists, 51 Mezhraiontsy, 34 anarchists, 79 Mensheviks, and 98 Socialist Revolutionaries.⁴⁹ Police agents infiltrated many of the Bolshevik organisations – M.E. Chernomazov, who worked in the sick-fund organisation in New Lessner, and Ia. Ia. Ozol'-Osis, a worker from Reikhel, both members of the Petersburg Committee, were police spies. A member of the Vyborg District Committee, V.E. Shurkanov, was also an informer. Chernomazov had a considerable following in the Petersburg Committee for his radical positions, and Shurkanov, who used the name of Limonin in his reports with the Okhrana, wrote highly intelligent reports.

In October 1916, Shliapnikov returned to Petrograd from abroad, and together with P.A. Zalutskii, who also had returned from exile by this time, and V.M. Molotov, a former student of the Polytechnical Institute, reestablished in November the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee.⁵⁰ The reestablished Russian Bureau was not strong enough to assume effective leadership over revolutionary activities in Petrograd. It lacked manpower, and, moreover, the Petersburg Committee, which had proudly continued to lead the rank-and-file Bolsheviks, did not easily submit to the Russian Bureau's instructions. The Russian Bureau was more keenly aware of the Bolsheviks' unpreparedness for a revolutionary offensive. Naturally their strategy tended to be more cautious than the Petersburg Committee's. The differences were to be reflected in their respective attitudes toward the 14 February 1917 demonstration and subsequently in their strategies during the February Revolution.

Throughout the war the Bolsheviks consistently held a militant position against the war and against the tsarist government. Their view was at first unpopular among the workers, but as the workers grew increasingly disenchanted with the war, the Bolsheviks successfully extended their influence. The existence of 3,000 hard-core Bolsheviks – dedicated, determined, and scattered throughout Petrograd – was certainly important to the dynamic development of the workers' movement during the war. Nevertheless, the Soviet-era historians' claim that the Bolsheviks were the most influential group among the Petrograd workers needs to be corrected. As McKean comments, after all, 3,000 Bolsheviks were miniscule compared with the swelling number of the total workforce of 392,800 by 1917.⁵¹ Their foolhardy militancy was often counter-

49 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 368–9.

50 Shliapnikov 1923b, part 1, pp. 249–50; part 2, pp. 35–42; Dazhina 1968, pp. 281–2.

51 McKean 1990, p. 396.

productive, leading to police repressions, disrupting organisational continuity. Furthermore, the Bolsheviks were hampered by the differences between the Russian Bureau and the Petersburg Committee. Despite Soviet historians' exaggerated claims, the Bolsheviks were not in a position to lead the workers on the eve of the February Revolution.

The Loss of Popularity and Reorientation of the Workers' Group

The Workers' Group Attempt to Improve the Workers' Conditions

The realignment of the Menshevik groups centred around the formation of the Workers' Group in the Central War Industries Committee. The defencists welcomed the formation of the Workers' Group as the proletariat's positive contribution to national defence. Gvozdev was its chairman, and two brilliant Menshevik intellectuals, Bogdanov and Maevskii, joined its secretariat. Nonetheless, it would be erroneous to label the Workers' Group as a defencist organisation. The Duma socialist faction favoured the formation of the Workers' Group for two reasons. First, the working class would gain a legal organisation to protect its class interests. Second, the Workers' Group would become an important vehicle through which the workers could wage a struggle, together with the bourgeoisie, against the tsarist regime.⁵² To the overwhelming majority of lower-echelon party workers the issue of war was inconsequential and the need to create a legal organisation outweighed any other consideration.

The Workers' Group was created as a result of the election on 29 November 1915.⁵³ During the discussion the Workers' Group presented a consistently

52 Dvinov 1962, pp. 84–5. Linde states that Potresov's group of defencists stayed away from the Workers' Group. Linde 1974, p. 7. Potresov himself was not involved in the Workers' Group, but Maevskii and Bogdanov, who took a position similar to Potresov, became important members in the secretariat of the Workers' Group.

53 The following members were elected: to the Central War Industries Committee, Kuz'ma Gvozdev, chairman (Erikson), I.I. Emel'ianov (Pipe Factory), G.E. Breido (Lessner), F.Ia. Iakovlev (Pipe Factory), E.A. Kuz'min (Pipe Factory), G.N. Komarov (Obukhov), Vladimir N. Abrasimov (Promet), E.A. Gudkov (Promet), E.A. Anasovskii (?), and Ia. Ia. Iakovlev (Putilov) – Emel'ianov, Komarov, and Iakovlev were Right SRs, and the rest were Mensheviks; to the Petrograd District War Industries Committee, A.A. Ershov (Baltic Shipyard), A.V. Kochalov (Putilov), N.V. Vasil'ev (Aivaz), V.M. Boshevol'nov (Nobel), Ia.S. Shilin (Petrograd Metal) and A.S. Ostapenko (Okhta Gunpowder) – all were SR workers. Abrasimov was a police spy. RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1059, ll. 85–6. Their party affiliations were based on Melancon 1990, p. 98. Judging from this list of elected members, it is obvious that the strength of the Workers' Group lay in the large, state-owned munitions factories.

internationalist argument on the war, and defended their participation in the War Industries Committee on two counts: the political expediency of acquiring a legal organisation, and the need to create a common arena for the political struggle waged jointly with the bourgeoisie against tsarism. Ignoring Guchkov's plea for class collaboration, Gvozdev stated: 'We have no desire to destroy Germany, and we shall not enter into the [Central War Industries] Committees for this purpose'. The workers would participate in them for 'the organisation of society's forces and the struggle with the internal enemy'. But Gvozdev criticised the Bolsheviks for insisting on establishing socialism immediately:

Socialism is not on our agenda yet, but the present task is the transfer of power from the hands of the nobility into the hands of the capitalists. In economic questions the bourgeoisie is our enemy, but in political questions it would go along with us, hand in hand, since it needs the conditions of free political life as much as we do.⁵⁴

The resolution of the Workers' Group, adopted on 29 November, stated these aims: (1) to oppose any attempts to drag the working class into the war; (2) to consider the war harmful to the working class; (3) to demand peace without annexations and indemnities; (4) to conclude that the hopeless situation in which the nation found itself was the result of the government's policy; (5) to blame the Duma for having supported the government and for lacking the courage to seek the support of the people; (6) to struggle for the convocation of a constituent assembly and for freedom of the press and unions; (7) to demand an end to suppression of nationalist organisations and recognition of their right to self-determination; (8) to demand an eight-hour work day and land for peasants; and (9) to achieve the democratisation of zemstvos and municipal self-governments.⁵⁵

The discussions and the resolution adopted at the 29 November meeting clearly show that Bolshevik accusations that the Workers' Group supported the war and class collaboration were groundless. The group stood for the internationalist position of peace without annexations and indemnities. To be sure, class collaboration was the fundamental goal of Guchkov and Konovalov in inviting the workers' representatives in the Central War Industries Committee. In February 1916, Guchkov wrote an open letter to Gvozdev, requesting that the Workers' Group intervene in the labour dispute to achieve peace between

54 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1059, ll. 80–1.

55 Ibid., ll. 84–5.

labour and capital. Gvozdev rejected this request outright, pledging to protect working-class interests.⁵⁶ Fully aware of the intentions of the leaders of the Central War Industries Committee, and risking the danger of being labelled as class collaborators, the Workers' Group nonetheless defended its participation. In the leaflet distributed to the workers, they stated that they participated in the War Industries Committees 'to protect energetically the workers' interests from all attempts to reduce our hard-won gains'.⁵⁷

As a practical measure to protect working-class interests, the Workers' Group attempted to establish a mechanism through which the workers could present their demands. They advocated the reestablishment of the *starosta* system (factory elders) and the creation of conciliation boards. The workers had been given the right to elect elders in the Law of 1903, but this right was eventually taken away. Thanks to the efforts of the Workers' Group, however, the *starosta* system suddenly acquired popularity among the workers in 1916. The Central War Industries Committee at its Second Congress in February 1916 approved the demand to reestablish the *starosta* system in every factory.⁵⁸

The idea of conciliation boards had been in the minds of the leaders of the Central War Industries Committee since long before the Workers' Group was formed. Guchkov, for instance, had made a proposal to establish such a channel for labour negotiations to the Special Council for Defence, and had negotiated with the minister of trade and industry, Prince V.N. Shakhovskoi, for concrete measures to put the idea into practice. The Workers' Group after its formation immediately picked up the idea, worked out a detailed proposal, and presented it at the Second Congress of the War Industries Committees in February 1916.⁵⁹ The joint efforts by the Workers' Group and the leaders of the Central War Industries Committee immediately provoked strong opposition from the industrialists. A Moscow industrialist, I.P. Guzhon, declared: 'They will bring such harm, allowing the workers' representatives of committees to be engaged in politics'. Rejected by the government and opposed by the industrialists, the *starosta* system and the conciliation boards remained largely on paper until the February Revolution.⁶⁰

56 For Guchkov's letter and Gvozdev's reply, see GARF, f. 570, op. 1, d. 2844, ll. 4–5; Dvinov 1962, pp. 147–8.

57 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1059, l. 123.

58 GARF 579, op. 1, d. 2235, pp. 19–21. Also see GARF, f. DPOO, d. 347/1917, ll. 11–12 (a circular of the Workers' Group, 19 September 1916).

59 'Deiatel'nost' Rabochei gruppy', GARF 579, op. 1, d. 2235, pp. 17–19.

60 Diakin 1967, pp. 196–7; 'Deiatel'nost' Rabochei gruppy', GARF 579, op. 1, d. 2235, p. 21.

The Workers' Group was also concerned with the improvement of the workers' living conditions. It initiated the workers' dining hall (*stolovaia*) campaign and actively participated in the workers' cooperative movement. These activities served dual purposes. Not only were they attempts to improve the workers' living conditions, but also they were intended to be a focal point where the workers' movement and the liberal opposition coalesced. In the autumn of 1916 the Workers' Group presented a demand to the Petrograd city duma to establish public dining halls managed by the workers' organisation in conjunction with the city self-government. At the initiative of the Workers' Group, eighty persons from the sick funds and the workers' cooperatives met in September 1916 and created a special commission for the creation of public dining halls. This commission demanded that the city administration make funds and space available – a demand that eventually led to the city duma's decision to open such eating facilities in Petrograd.⁶¹ As a more fundamental solution to the food supply problem, the Workers' Group, believing that the crisis could be solved only by society taking over the distribution of food, supported the idea of convening an All-Russian Congress of Food Supply, to which representatives of all classes of society would be invited. This concept was strongly endorsed by the liberal activists in the Unions of Zemstvos and of Towns. But Protopopov moved quickly and banned the congress, scheduled to meet in early December.

The Workers' Group Opposes the Ill-Timed Strikes

The Workers' Group considered the workers' offensive in strikes and demonstrations premature and in the long run harmful when the workers were not fully organised under its leadership and other forces of society were not ready for decisive action. It would provoke police repression and nullify whatever gains the workers had made in the difficult time of war.⁶² Whether for self-defence or for forming a united action with other classes in society, the Workers' Group often attempted to dissuade workers from joining what it considered to be ill-prepared strikes. For instance, it opposed the strike of 9 January 1916. During the Putilov strike in February 1916, the Workers' Group issued a leaflet appealing to workers to stop the strike, since an isolated, spontaneous outburst would 'weaken and destroy the developing conflict of all Russian society with the government'. During the October strike in 1916, it issued a similar leaflet, characterising the strike movement as organised by 'irresponsible elements

61 'Deiatel'nost' Rabochei gruppy', GARF 579, op. 1, d. 2235, pp. 21–3.

62 Shliapnikov 1923b, p. 88; Maevskii 1918, pp. 4, 7–8.

wishing to push it to extreme activities'. It recommended that workers return to work and petitioned military authorities to open the factories.⁶³

Such activities invited strong criticism from the Initiative Group, the radical wing of the Mensheviks. After the Second Congress of the War Industries Committee, K.S. Grinevich, one of the Initiative Group leaders, wrote a letter to the Menshevik Secretariat Abroad, complaining of the Workers' Group's strong leaning toward defencism. The Menshevik internationalists abroad, led by Martov and Iurii Larin, wrote a letter to the Workers' Group, severely reprimanding its members for their betrayal of the internationalist position and threatening their expulsion from the Menshevik internationalist group.⁶⁴ Not only the Mensheviks abroad but also the Duma deputies began raising a strong voice against the Workers' Group. A series of violent meetings were held in March, and at the beginning of April, defying all criticisms, the Workers' Group boldly challenged the Menshevik leadership abroad for not knowing the real situation inside Russia. The Initiative Group decided to break completely with the Workers' Group, openly seeking a new path for the left-wing internationalist alliance. The Workers' Group, however, defied the criticisms from abroad, as well as from inside.⁶⁵

The Workers' Group's moderate policy, restraining the workers' penchant for direct action, eventually cost the group its popularity. It became increasingly clear to its leaders that they were losing ground to the more radical elements. When the Workers' Group held a meeting of mostly Vyborg factory representatives in July in order to elicit their support against the criticisms raised by the Initiative Group, most of the representatives condemned the Workers' Group and demanded its withdrawal from the War Industries Committees.⁶⁶ During the insurance campaign in the summer of 1916, Gvozdev received only seventeen votes in his own 'fiefdom', Erikson Factory, and Breido only fourteen votes in Lessner, where both had received more than 1,000 votes in the election campaign for the Workers' Group in the autumn of 1915.⁶⁷

The Workers' Group Swings to a Left-Wing Position

Alarmed by the loss of their influence, the Workers' Group finally changed their strategy in a radical direction in December 1916. On 13 to 15 December in Petrograd, the Workers' Group held a conference in which representatives of other

63 'Deiatel'nost' Rabochei gruppy', GARF 579, op. 1, d. 2235, pp. 9, 14–16.

64 Tiutiukin 1972, p. 220; GARF, f. 579, op. 1, d. 2844, l. 7; Dvinov 1962, p. 131.

65 Tiutiukin 1972, p. 221.

66 McKean 1990, p. 394.

67 Tiutiukin 1972, p. 222.

workers' organisations also took part. The resolution adopted at this conference reiterated the proletariat's dual goals: peace without annexations and indemnities, and struggle with the internal enemy, the tsarist government. Viewing the current situation as a general crisis, in which all classes of Russian society, including the Unions of Zemstvos and of Towns, the War Industries Committees, the Duma, and even the nobility, had joined forces against tsarism, the Workers' Group concluded that the workers' task would be to join this struggle. Its task was not to alienate the privileged class, but to persuade it to move more decisively in the struggle against the regime, a struggle for a 'decisive overthrow of the existing regime and the establishment, in its place, of a Provisional Government based on the organized, independent, and free people'.⁶⁸ The Workers' Group decided to launch a campaign for the workers' strike movement at the opening of the Duma after the Christmas recess. Although it had opposed the strike on 9 January 1916, it now actively supported the workers' offensive on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday in 1917, and urged the workers to join the strike. More importantly, abandoning its previous position against any illegal activities, the Workers' Group decided to establish illegal factory 'assistance groups', to facilitate contacts with workers, and in major defence factories. It is important to note that these assistance groups were actually created.⁶⁹

The Workers' Group represented one of the viable alternatives to the radical anti-war revolutionary groups in Petrograd. Their history clearly reveals the nature of labour politics in the tsarist regime and proves that even their moderate programmes were impossible to achieve in the context of tsarist labour politics. None of the Workers' Group's pet programmes was successfully implemented. Not only were they vetoed by the government, they were not approved by the industrialists either.

All the Mensheviks who participated in the Workers' Group had a fundamental belief in the essentially revolutionary character of the Russian bourgeoisie and in its ability to replace the tsarist regime. They held, further, that it would be possible to form a united front of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. But as we have seen, the Russian liberals, though accepting the possibility of

68 GARF, f. DPOO, op. 17, d. 45, 1917, ll. 40–6; McKean 1990, pp. 398. Tiutiukin advances a remarkable interpretation, unorthodox among Soviet historians during the Soviet period, that the new direction adopted by the Workers' Group 'objectively contributed' to the revolutionary situation, influencing the 'defencist-oriented' workers to act decisively in the struggle against the tsarist regime. This view, indirectly hinted at in his book, *Voina, mir, revoliutsiia*, was more forcefully presented in the symposium devoted to the February Revolution. See Tiutiukin in Nauchinaia sessiia 1967, sec. 1, pp. 45–8.

69 McKean 1990, pp. 398–9.

approaching the revolution, were more afraid of revolt from below that they would not be able to control. And the workers, seeing no results from participation by the Workers' Group in the War Industries Committees but a request from the group to put a brake on the strike movement, became increasingly disenchanted. Their strike movement developed independently, and was not, as the Workers' Group envisaged, a part of the *obshchestvennye* – societal – forces against the tsarist regime, but rather a force of itself, outside of and against all other forces in society.

Although Guchkov and Konovalov defended the Workers' Group as a moderate wing of the labour movement striving to inject peace in labour strife, in the final analysis Konovalov's attempt not only failed but also backfired. Contrary to the general contention of Soviet-era historians, the Workers' Group had its share in deepening the revolutionary crisis.

Left-Wing Socialists Move toward Forming a United Front

Menshevik Initiative Group

The Initiative Group consistently stood against the war. At first, the Initiative Group supported the participation of the workers' representatives in the War Industries Committees, not to cooperate with the bourgeoisie, but as a means to protect working-class interests.⁷⁰ Even after the formation of the Workers' Group, the Initiative Group refused to break its organisational tie with them, but watched their cautious activities with growing concern. The 'revolutionary defencism' of the Workers' Group, however, gradually disillusioned these radical Mensheviks. Finally, at the end of June 1916, convinced that further negotiations with the Workers' Group would be useless, it decided to call for their withdrawal from the War Industries Committees. As relations between the two groups broke down completely, it sought a left-wing alliance with the group standing for the internationalist position. The Initiative Group had around four to five hundred members at the end of 1916 and party cells existed in twenty-five to thirty factories, and played an important role in labour unions and cooperatives.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Melancon 1990, p. 169; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 138–9; Dvinov 1962, p. 149.

⁷¹ Tiutiukin 1972, pp. 221–2; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 407; McKean 1990, pp. 389–90, 397; Melancon 1990, pp. 169–70, 173, 211.

Mezhraiontsy

In the spring and the summer of 1915 the Mezhraiontsy were the focus of police repression. The membership dwindled to between 60 and 80. According to an Okhrana agent, the organisation was reduced to 'the state that one cannot talk about its existence'. It was not until February 1916 that the Mezhraiontsy resumed their organisational activities mostly in Vasil'evskii Island and Petrograd Side. The membership was restored to 150 by the autumn of 1916.⁷² By the end of 1916 the Mezhraiontsy had seven district committees, and party cells existed in sixteen enterprises as well as in Petrograd Imperial University and the Psychoneurological Institute. The Mezhraiontsy's uniqueness lay in their energetic publishing activities. While the Bolshevik illegal printing presses were often destroyed by the police, the Mezhraiontsy managed to maintain theirs, and issued a series of anti-war leaflets.

It was not easy to bring together the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, who differed greatly in outlook and ideology, and who had in the past heaped abuse on each other. It was to the credit of the Mezhraiontsy, who served as a go-between, that the anti-war groups, despite their differences, gingerly formed a loose coalition. The Mezhraiontsy had three or four district committees, several circles of propagandists, and a student organisation – altogether 200 worker-activists.⁷³

The Left and Right Socialist Revolutionaries

The radical wing of the Socialist Revolutionaries formed an alliance with the Bolsheviks in opposition to the election campaign to the Central War Industries Committee in the autumn of 1915. At the meeting of 29 November, the SR internationalists also walked out. The SR internationalist organisation, the Petrograd group of Socialist Revolutionaries, then composed an open letter, demonstrating their solidarity with the Bolsheviks.⁷⁴

The radical SR circles existed in four districts: the Vyborg, Nava-Petergof, Nevskii, Vasil'evskii, and Kolpino. Their strength lay in the Baltic Shipyard, the Pipe Factory, the Neva Shipyard, Obukhov, and the Putilov Factory. The number

72 Early in 1915 the police made a chain of arrests touched off by the arrest of an inexperienced activist of the Mezhraiontsy group at the Nikolaevskii Station, who was carrying, rather conspicuously, a big sack containing illegal printing equipment. For the fascinating details of how the police workers destroyed the network of the Mezhraiontsy, see RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1058, ll. 9–24. Also see Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 136; McKean, pp. 390–1.

73 Melancon 1990, p. 212.

74 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1059, ll. 91–3; Melancon 1990, pp. 99–100.

of SR-Internationalists numbered two to three hundred.⁷⁵ Koriakin worked at New Lessner, and I. Mil'chik was active in Erikson. Also beyond factory gates, SR intellectuals such as Boris and Ol'ga Flekkel' and A. Gizetti led several workers' educational societies in the Narva-Petergof District.⁷⁶

In the beginning of 1916, the radical SR internationalists collaborated with the Bolsheviks in their attempts to turn the Putilov and the New Lessner strikes into a general strike, but, as was mentioned in Chapter 5, they were met with opposition from the Mezhraiontsy and the Menshevik Initiative Group. After the March strikes subsided, the radical SRs went into a hiatus for two months. But in May, the SR Petersburg Committee was reconstituted and took a further radical direction. In its inaugural proclamation, the newly created SR Petersburg Committee called for a 'civil war against the bourgeoisie and the landowners'. Melancon notes that this was the first mention of a 'civil war' by any revolutionary groups.⁷⁷ Detecting the radicalisation of the SR Petersburg Committee, the police decided to destroy the SR organisations in the capital. On 31 July and for the following days, the police conducted massive arrests of the SR Petersburg Committee and other SR organisations. The Okhrana agent proudly reported in October 1916: 'The Socialist Revolutionary party is completely disorganised and as a properly functioning organisation, united with a central leadership, does not exist'.⁷⁸

In the summer of 1916, Petr Aleksandrovich clandestinely returned to Petrograd from abroad. He attempted to re-establish the Petersburg Committee, at first by gathering SR intellectuals. Meeting with a miserable failure in this attempt, partly due to the unwillingness and disagreements among SR intellectuals, and partly due to the hostility of the SR worker-activists, Aleksandrovich formed an unofficial committee through a group of worker acquaintances, which served as a city committee on the eve of the revolution. He participated in a series of joint meetings with the Bolsheviks, Mezhraiontsy, and the Initiative Group.⁷⁹

75 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 137; McKean 1990, pp. 390, 397; Melancon 1990, pp. 90–1. Melancon argues that 'the Right Mensheviks and Right SRs formed the two largest and most influential radical contingents within the workers' movement, whereas the Bolsheviks had a lesser role'. Melancon 1990, p. 91. But comparing the numerical strengths between the SR-internationalists and the Bolsheviks, it is difficult to make this argument.

76 Melancon 1990, pp. 210–11.

77 Melancon 1990, p. 111.

78 Tiutiukin 1972, p. 66.

79 Melancon 1990, pp. 192–4.

Kerenskii and the Right srs

Until the summer of 1915, when the underground revolutionary organisations were destroyed by the police, Kerenskii was the centre of revolutionary activities. On 16 and 17 July, Kerenskii invited the Socialist Revolutionary activists, including Chaikovskii and Peshekhonov, to his apartment. Around thirty representatives attended the Congress of Socialist Revolutionaries, which passed a resolution calling for the convocation of a constituent assembly, a change in the state structure, and formation of a united front of all revolutionary forces. The resolution recognised the powerlessness of the Duma in solving the current crisis, and appealed that 'the Duma should serve as a body to unite the people's forces until the convocation of the constituent assembly'. The resolution pointed out the necessity of uniting the Duma SR organisation with the underground activities. After this 'congress' a series of meetings of the Petrograd Socialist Revolutionaries were held in the outskirts of Petrograd, at which the possibility of creating a soviet of workers' deputies was suggested. 'This conference had great revolutionary significance,' Melancon asserts, 'in that it was one of the sources of a new Right socialist movement aimed at overthrowing the government in order to win the war'.⁸⁰

Kerenskii was an ardent believer in the alliance between the Socialist parties and the liberal opposition for the struggle to overthrow tsarism. It was for that reason that he became active in the Masonic organisation, through which he established personal connections with the liberal activists.⁸¹ His activities and speeches in the Duma were all appeals to the liberals to assume more active leadership of the masses in the revolutionary struggle against the government. When the workers' movement became enlivened in the summer of 1915, Kerenskii became fearful of its adverse effect on the liberals. Thus, on 4 September, Kerenskii made a speech at the meeting of the Trudoviks in the Duma, stating that they must not give the government an excuse for internal repression. They should assume a waiting tactic and appeal to the workers 'not to strike, not to waste their efforts on an aimless offensive but to maintain them for a general revolutionary offensive in the near future under better conditions'. For the next couple of days, the Trudoviks and the Mensheviks, who had adopted a similar position, went around to the Petrograd factories to persuade the workers to return to work.⁸²

80 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1058, ll. 34–5, 40–42. Melancon 1990, pp. 84–6.

81 See Chapter 10.

82 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1058, ll. 98–9.

During the election campaign for the War Industries Committee, the right-wing SRS supported the participation of the workers' representatives in the War Industries Committee. As we have seen, their policy provoked a strong protest from the left-wing SRS. The split between the right and the left became wider. Kerenskii, who had served as a link between the right SRS and the left SRS, took an ambiguous position. While he stood for the internationalist position, supporting the Zimmerwald conference, he opposed workers' strikes as detrimental to the struggle against tsarism. The SR internationalist activists became increasingly dissatisfied with Kerenskii. The SR meeting held in December, called by Kerenskii, created their Petersburg Committee, but this committee was dominated by the SR internationalists.⁸³ While the right, together with the Workers' Group, opposed the strike on 9 January 1916, the newly created SR Petersburg Committee met with the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee and discussed the joint plan to organise a strike and demonstration on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday. The SR leaflet also called for individual actions for an armed uprising, as the situation allowed.⁸⁴ Alarmed by the militancy of both parties, the police arrested, at the end of December, both the Bolshevik and the SR activists to undercut the planned demonstrations and actions on 9 January.⁸⁵ Undaunted, the remaining SR-internationalists, led by the Petersburg Committee, held a conference in late January, and passed a resolution that took a radical anti-war, anti-government, and anti-bourgeois position. In February, the SR-internationalists called for collaboration with the Bolsheviks and the Menshevik Initiative Group, and in the Putilov strike in March, the SRS and the Bolsheviks jointly called for a general strike.⁸⁶

Kerenskii witnessed the radicalisation of the SR activists with consternation. His illness sidelined him for six months, but when he resumed activities, he kept his distance from the SR-internationalists, and concentrated his attention on forming a liberal-socialist alliance in the form of a Left Bloc. Thirteen intellectuals and one worker were invited to Chkheidze's apartment on 9 October 1916 to discuss the possibility of forming such an alliance. As for the attitude toward the war, a majority of the participants accepted the principle of the internationalist position of peace without annexation or indemnities. The participants expressed grave concerns with the growing indifference among the masses to the Duma and the Duma's loss of prestige. They were also alarmed by their own lack of control over the masses – a situation that was being exploited

83 Melancon 1990, pp. 101–4.

84 Melancon 1990, p. 104; Rabochee dvizhenie 1958 p. 405.

85 Melancon 1990, pp. 104–5.

86 Melancon 1990, pp. 105–9.

by the extremists. To exert more influence among the masses, the participants decided to create a Left Bloc. The resolution, drafted by Peshekhonov and adopted at the meeting, stated that because of the 'definite decline of influence of the progressive-liberal political tendencies headed by the Kadets', the 'complete bankruptcy of the Duma and the Progressive Bloc', and the 'unquestionable confusion of the central government', the radical intellectuals had decided 'to strive for the creation of a Left Bloc to take advantage of an expedient moment and to achieve political liberation of the country'. It should be remembered that at the same time the Progressists led by Konovalov seceded from the Progressive Bloc, advocating closer cooperation with the leaders of the workers' movement.⁸⁷ Although documentary evidence is lacking, it appears that the proposal for the creation of the Left Bloc was made with the knowledge and the support of the Progressists, particularly of Konovalov. The Left Bloc, however, did not come into existence as a political group with definite platforms and programmes. It did not go beyond a group of socialist intelligentsia who met from time to time to discuss the current political situation and exchange information. Nevertheless, the Left Bloc played an important role in establishing a network of left-wing socialists that prepared for the formation of the Petrograd Soviet during the February Revolution.

Realignment of the Revolutionary Parties

During the war, there emerged the tendency of the realignment of the anti-war radical revolutionary parties. The internationalists – the Bolsheviks, Mezhrainontsy, the Initiative Group of the Mensheviks and the left-wing SRs – slowly formed a loose alliance. Melancon emphasises the growing SR-internationalists' collaboration with the Bolsheviks and the Mezhrainontsy.⁸⁸ On 7 November 1916 a joint meeting of local Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and SR-Internationalists was held to create an inter-party information bureau. The Mezhrainontsy suggested the convocation of a joint conference consisting of the Mezhrainontsy, the Initiative Group and the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee to create a single central Social Democratic Centre.⁸⁹ It appears that willingness to form such an alliance was much stronger at the lower level. In the factories these anti-war groups acted in harmony in deciding to strike or call a factory general

87 *Politicheskoe polozhenie* 1926, pp. 29–30; see Chapter 3.

88 Melancon 1990, pp. 108–9; Melancon 2000, p. 9.

89 McKean 1990, pp. 397–8.

meeting. The Bolshevik Petersburg Committee was willing to enter into such an alliance on an ad hoc basis, but the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee was never enthusiastic about cooperation with other groups. Details of the formation of the internationalist alliance are still obscure and await further historical research.⁹⁰

The moderate socialist groups standing in opposition to the Bolsheviks gravitated toward the Workers' Group. While the Bolsheviks and other internationalist groups had no confidence in the liberals to wage a struggle against tsarism, the Workers' Group considered the joint struggle with the bourgeoisie against the tsarist regime the most urgent task of the moment. Their political goal was to integrate the workers in a joint struggle headed by the liberals, but it became obvious that this policy had little appeal to the workers. By the autumn of 1916, the Workers' Group was clearly losing ground to the anti-war socialists, and to regain its lost influence among the workers it turned leftward in December 1916, sharpening its attack on the government and advocating a decisive offensive for its overthrow. McKean notes that this volte-face earned the popularity of the Workers' Group among the workers, and states: 'at this time workers would respond to any party or group irrespective of its political stance so long as it articulated their resentments against the political system'.⁹¹ Thus, two opposing forces in the workers' movement, in spite of their vast tactical and ideological differences, came to stand in direct opposition to the regime, whose overthrow they both desired and worked for.

The Workers' Group also created an important buffer zone between the liberals and the workers' mass movement. If the workers' movement had been under the complete influence of extremists like the Bolsheviks and the left-wing Socialist Revolutionaries, the liberals would have had no choice but to turn their backs completely on the mass movement. The liberals tried until the last moment to avoid a revolution, and the majority, with a few exceptions, refused to lend their support even to the Workers' Group. The existence of the Workers' Group, however, contributed to the liberals' psychological acceptance of revolution. If revolution was unavoidable, they would not have to stand in complete opposition to it, because they could count on the moderating influence of the Workers' Group. In this sense, the existence of the Workers' Group provided a vital link between the liberals and the revolution.

90 Some Soviet historians have emphasised the importance of the alliance of left-wing internationalists. See Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1; Tiutiukin 1972, pp. 226–43.

91 McKean 1990, p. 399.

The government had no policy toward the workers' movement except for police repression. It offered no constructive means of dealing with the causes of the workers' grievances, nor did it attempt to integrate the workers into established society by allowing them their own legal organisations. The government's policy naturally drove the masses of workers to turn receptive ears to the propaganda of the underground revolutionary activists, who attempted to channel the workers' specific grievances into a general struggle to overthrow the government. The increasing radicalisation of the workers' movement during the war revealed the impracticability of the dream nurtured by Konovalov and Guchkov of injecting a moderate element into the workers' movement to achieve peace between labour and capital. The Workers' Group created for this purpose was turned into an instrument of revolution by the moderate socialists themselves.

Nonetheless, the vast majority of the workers remained beyond anyone's firm control. McKean states:

[T]he radicalization of the Petrograd working class in the war owed very little to the endeavours of the revolutionary parties. The workers' final alienation from the regime so visibly evident by the autumn of 1916, was rather the product of the economic and social dislocations of urban life caused by the war and the crisis of high politics which destroyed the monarchy's last shreds of popularity.⁹²

The leaders of the revolutionary parties generally felt that the atmosphere in the factories was becoming highly charged, but even the activists in closest contact with the workers did not know where or when a spark would ignite the explosion.

92 McKean 1990, p. 405.

PART 2
On the Eve



The Tsar, the Tsarina, and the Government

Isolation of the Tsar and Tsarina

The assassination of Rasputin did not eradicate the ills of the Russian government. Although the authorities forbade any printing of the assassination in the newspapers, the news spread quickly and widely. People kissed each other in the streets and burned candles in the Kazan Cathedral to celebrate the death of the 'holy devil'. Common folks waiting in queues for bakeries and butcher shops rejoiced, saying 'A dog's death for a dog!'¹ The tsar and tsarina, however, now barricaded themselves within their small world and, shut off from reality, reacted to the outside with increased suspicion and hostility. The violent act made it impossible for Nicholas to make any concessions for fear that they would make him look weak, and it also signalled to those who desired change that direct actions against him would be the only way to achieve the goal.² The assassination further widened the gap between the imperial couple and the world outside.

Instead of rejoicing at Rasputin's disappearance, the Russian aristocratic class became apprehensive that his violent death would be a prelude to something more catastrophic. Fearing that Nicholas's stubborn refusal to adopt reforms would bring the entire aristocracy to its doom, they intensified their efforts to change his mind. But the more they talked about reform, the wider became the gulf separating the throne from the aristocracy.

Nicholas was in Mogilev on 17 December when he received a letter from Alexandra telling him of Rasputin's murder. He immediately left Mogilev for Tsarskoe Selo to console his distraught wife, who was crushed by the death of the *starets*. In his letter to the empress, Nicholas said that he was 'shocked and shaken', but close observers noted that he was 'gay and good-humored to a degree he had not been for a long time past'. Secretly he might have felt relief to be free of Rasputin, who had not inspired in him the blind attachment his wife had felt. But when it came to the question of loyalty, he would stand firm behind his wife. Alexandra, on the other hand, was completely shaken by Rasputin's death. 'Her grief was inconsolable', observed Pierre Gilliard, tutor

¹ Paleologue n.d., (2 January 1917), vol. 3, p. 135.

² See Buchanan 1923, p. 39.

of the tsarevich, 'Her idol had been shattered. He who alone could save her son had been slain. The period of waiting began – that dreadful waiting for the disaster which there was no escaping'.³

On the empress's order Rasputin's body was brought to a chapel outside Petrograd, where his female admirers held a small funeral service. Alexandra came with her daughters. Kneeling in front of the coffin, she prayed and wept for a long time. Rasputin was buried three days later, 22 December, in a small plot owned by Vyrubova, in Tsarskoe Selo. The service was at three o'clock in the morning – an odd hour for a burial – as if to hide the event from the public. Nicholas, Protopopov, and V.N. Voeikov were pallbearers. Alexandra wept bitterly and desperately. Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovich sardonically noted in his diary: 'It was so touching that no commentary is necessary'.⁴

The involvement of Grand Duke Dmitrii Pavlovich in the assassination drew the rest of the imperial family together. Although Purishkevich escaped to the front and Prince Iusupov retired to his private estate, Dmitrii Pavlovich was put under house arrest on 18 December at the tsarina's command. Many of the grand dukes and grand duchesses considered this action illegal, since she had no authority to issue such an order without the tsar's consent. Dmitrii's father Grand Duke Pavel Aleksandrovich and other relatives intervened and requested that the tsar release Dmitrii. But Nicholas adamantly refused. Such 'severe' punishment shocked the rest of the family. Dmitrii remained under house arrest, forbidden to receive any visitors, including his own father. On 23 December, he was deported to Persia to serve in the army. On Nicholas's special order no one was allowed to bid him farewell at the station. The shocked grand dukes and grand duchesses composed a joint petition to Nicholas, requesting his permission to transfer Dmitrii to a place with a better climate in view of his bad health. On 31 December Nicholas rejected this petition: 'No one is given the right to be involved in a murder ... I am surprised that you addressed such a petition to me'.⁵

In the eyes of Nicholas's relatives, the imperial couple was acting out of vengeance. Dmitrii's motives were 'pure' and 'patriotic', but he was deported brutally against the wishes of most of his relatives. Furthermore, those who dared to criticise the tsar and tsarina, even privately, were exiled from Petrograd. Grand Duchess Mariia Pavlovna, a half-sister of Dmitrii and daughter of Pavel Aleksandrovich and Princess Paley, was put under house arrest because

3 Letters of the Tsar to the Tsaritsa 1973, p. 312; Paley n.d., p. 183; Gilliard 1921, p. 183.

4 Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, p. 188.

5 Paley n.d., pp. 32–5; Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, pp. 186, 191–2; Nicolas Mikhailovitch, 1968, p. 136.

she had dared to bid her brother farewell at the station. On 31 December Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich, a well-known historian, was punished by expulsion from the capital for speaking out against the tsarina privately at a yacht club. At the beginning of January Kirill Vladimirovich was banished from the capital. Finally, the axe fell on Andrei Vladimirovich, the centre of the grand ducal movement. Colonel A.N. Linevich, a close friend of Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovich, was summoned by the tsar and asked about the 'anti-government activities' of his friend. Nicholas stated: 'It is a pity that he talks too much and speaks ill of me ... What on earth does he have against me? It seems that I have paid sufficient attention to him'.⁶ In a few days Andrei Vladimirovich was also deported from Petrograd. The tsar's relatives saw in these acts the intrigue of the tsarina, the 'Hesse woman', as Nikolai Mikhailovich called her, a foreigner and an intruder. 'The emperor's orders', writes Nikolai Mikhailovich, 'remind me of the vulgar Florentine nobles in the epoch of the Borgias and the Medici'.⁷

The failure to 'talk sense into the tsar' led some of the grand dukes to rest their hopes on the moderate wing of the liberal movement. During the crisis after the assassination, the grand dukes frequently met with Rodzianko. Nicholas's relatives were radicalised enough to see a compromise with the Duma and the establishment of a ministry of confidence as the only way to fend off the approaching storm. Some even discussed the possibility of a palace coup. According to the French Ambassador, Maurice Paléologue, on 22 December, at a party given by the industrialist Bogdanov, Grand Duke Gavriel Konstantinovich promised the other industrialists present that he would talk with his relatives about the possibility of removing Nicholas and establishing a regency. Presumably Grand Dukes Kirill, Boris, and Andrei Vladimirovich wanted to establish a regency under Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich.⁸ According to Duma deputy I.P. Demidov (Kadet), the grand dukes discussed a plan to remove the tsarina from power by using troops of a guard regiment supposedly led by Grand Duke Dmitrii Pavlovich, but the latter would not agree to the plan. The mother of Kirill, Boris and Andrei, the Grand Duchess Mariia Pavlovna, suggested to Rodzianko that the tsarina should be forcibly removed. Rodzianko hastened to remind the Grand Duchess that he was bound by the oath of allegiance to the tsar. As Diakin notes, the grand dukes' 'conspiracy' reveals more

6 Paley n.d., pp. 39–40; Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, pp. 192, 193–4; Nicolas Mikhailovitch 1968, pp. 139–40.

7 Nicolas Mikhailovitch 1968, p. 138.

8 Paléologue n.d., (5 January 1917), p. 140.

their despair than a serious plan.⁹ 'They want the Duma to put the match to the powder', commented Maklakov, 'In other words, they are expecting of us what we are expecting of them'.¹⁰ Clearly, the majority of Nicholas's relatives had already deserted him before the revolution, although they themselves did not have the courage to remove the emperor and the empress.

On 10 February, the imperial couple received Grand Dukes Aleksandr Mikhailovich (son of Nicholas I's brother, Mikhail) and Mikhail Aleksandrovich – the latter the tsar's own brother. Aleksandr Mikhailovich stated that although he himself was an enemy of the parliamentary system he could see no alternative other than the formation of a ministry acceptable to the Duma to relieve the tension in the Duma. The empress, smiling cynically, interjected: 'What you are talking about makes me laugh! Nicky is an autocrat! How could he share his God-given right with anyone else?' In desperation Aleksandr Mikhailovich raised his voice at Alexandra: 'I see you are ready to perish with your husband. But don't forget us. Must we all suffer from your blind foolishness? You don't have the right to bring your relatives along to the abyss'.¹¹

If Nicholas was relieved by the disappearance of Rasputin, his relatives' interference on behalf of the murderer and their increased outcry against his wife angered him and brought the royal couple even closer together. Every day the empress visited Rasputin's grave with Vyrybova, spending hours in prayers. Shutting out the world, Nicholas and Aleksandra secluded themselves in their private retreat, frightened by a mystical premonition that they were doomed, but unable and unwilling to do anything to escape this fate.

Golitsyn Replaces Trepov

The removal of Rasputin did not end the influence of the court camarilla. On 20 December, Protopopov was promoted from acting minister of internal affairs to full-fledged minister and was to become the target of public hatred, the role vacated by Rasputin. Trepov, who had striven to achieve some compromise with the Duma liberals, was dismissed on 26 December. Prince N.D. Golitsyn, a sixty-seven year old bureaucrat with close connections to the tsarina, became what turned out to be the last chairman of the Council of Ministers before the revolution. Golitsyn, a retired member of the State Coun-

9 Diakin 1967a, p. 264; Rodzianko 1927, p. 247.

10 Paléologue n.d., (17 January 1917), pp. 168–9.

11 Aleksandr Mikhailovich 1933, vol. 1, pp. 280–1.

cil, had been the chairman of the Committee for the Relief of the Wounded, of which the empress was honorary chairman. On 25 December he was suddenly summoned by the tsar and commanded to succeed Trepov. The old man, who had considered himself retired from active duty, was dumbfounded and declined to accept the offer on the pretext of illness, but finally had to surrender to the will of the sovereign. Though an honest man with no connections to the Rasputin clique, Golitsyn had no political programmes, a fact he himself later confessed.¹²

The dismissal of Trepov, the appointment of Golitsyn, and the promotion of Protopopov – all indicated that Nicholas's government had moved further to the right. This also became apparent when Nicholas changed the composition of the State Council on 1 January 1917. With a single stroke of the pen, the tsar purged the appointed members of the Progressive Bloc in the State Council and replaced them with members who had right-wing credentials. As a result, the right wing increased from 58 to 70 members. If the government continued to rely on the support of the right-centre (23 members) and counted on the nine ministers who had the right to vote in the State Council, the right wing now regained the majority, with 102 votes against the 96 votes of the Progressive Bloc.¹³ Reflecting the right-wing swing of the State Council, it elected the notorious former minister of justice, I.G. Shcheglovitov, as chairman of the State Council.

Despite this coup in the State Council, the right wing was seriously split. The enlightened members of the bureaucracy believed that the nation was headed blindly toward catastrophe and sought a way out through compromise with Duma liberals. During the Christmas vacation, A.V. Krivoshein, General A.A. Polivanov, Count A.A. Bobrinskii, and A.S. Taneev (Head of His Majesty's Chancellery, Vyubova's father) were involved in a series of meetings with the Duma liberals. Regarding themselves as prime candidates to head a government, the first three were receptive to the idea of the formation of a ministry of confidence.¹⁴ On the other hand, the more reactionary element around Nikolai Maklakov and A.A. Rimskii-Korsakov encouraged the tsar to take a firmer stand against the Duma by dissolving it and ordering a new election to purge the liberals. Rimskii-Korsakov's memorandum, which was handed to Protopopov on

12 Deposition of Golitsyn, Padenie 1925, vol. 2, p. 256.

13 *Utro Rossii* 1 January 1917.

14 For the series of meetings between the representatives of the liberals and the bureaucracy, see GARF, f. DPOO, d. 307a, t. 2, 1916 g., ll. 76v–76g; *ibid.*, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., l. 1; *ibid.*, f. POO, 1917 g., d. 669a, ll. 2–3; Maklakov's letter to Konovalov, *ibid.*, f. DPOO, op. 343, ZS 57, ch/1917 g., ll. 20–2.

15 January, proposed to change the laws governing the Duma in such a way as to increase the right-wing element, purge the undesirable elements from the state apparatus, and increase the right wing in the State Council.¹⁵ Some of his recommendations, such as changing the composition of the State Council, had already been implemented.

The split in the right wing was reflected in the division within the Golitsyn cabinet. On 3 January, the council of ministers discussed the date of the opening of the Duma after Christmas recess. Originally it was scheduled to open 13 January. Attempting to show his conciliatory attitude toward the Duma, Golitsyn had already made a statement that the new cabinet would reconvene the Duma as scheduled. But at the Council of Ministers' meeting, Protopopov proposed to postpone the Duma opening until 14 February. Eight ministers supported Protopopov and only six sided with the premier. The proposals of the cabinet meeting were referred to Nicholas, and he accepted Protopopov's.¹⁶

Protopopov Steps Up Repression

With Trepov's dismissal and Nicholas's self-imposed semi-retirement, there was no question that it was Protopopov who was running the show. Unlike the arch-reactionaries, who believed in the unswerving loyalty and patriotism of the masses, Protopopov did not underestimate the danger of a mass movement. For that reason he attempted to strengthen the police force and was particularly concerned with security measures in Petrograd.¹⁷ Nevertheless, he was not free of a misconception common among the reactionary politicians of the time that a revolution would be possible only at the instigation of a group of subversive elements. His main method of combatting the revolutionary movement was thus to emphasise police repression of underground revolutionary organisations.

15 Programma soiuza russkogo naroda 1927, pp. 243–4.

16 GARF, f. 1276, op. 10, d. 7, ll. 449–50. According to Kulikov, the Golitsyn cabinet was divided into two groups, those who favoured a compromise with the Duma and those who opposed it. The first group was headed by Golitsyn, and included Finance Minister P.L. Bark, War Minister M.A. Beliaev, Transport Minister E.B. Voinovskii-Kriger, Navy Minister I.K. Grigorovich, Foreign Minister N.N. Pokrovskii, Minister of Agriculture A.A. Ritikh. The reactionary group was headed by Protopopov. I find his inclusion of Beliaev in the first group somewhat strange, considering his actions during the February Revolution. Kulikov 2014a, p. 166.

17 See Chapter 8.

At the end of December 1916 and the beginning of January 1917, Protopopov's police raided Bolshevik underground organisations, and decimated the Petersburg Committee. The Socialist Revolutionaries were splintered and remained inactive. In January 1917, the group that Protopopov considered most dangerous was the Workers' Group of the Central War Industries Committee. He was alarmed by their growing radicalism and saw in the appeal of the Workers' Group to support the Duma a dangerous move to link the workers' movement with the liberal opposition. In early January General S.S. Khabalov, commander of the Petrograd Military District, served notice that henceforward his representative would sit on every meeting of the Workers' Group. On 17 and 19 January the police broke into their office on Liteinyi Prospekt and searched for evidence of illegal activities. Finally, on 27 January, Protopopov made a decisive move by having his police arrest the members of the Workers' Group in Petrograd.¹⁸ Protopopov had feared that such drastic measures might trigger a large-scale strike movement among the workers. When that did not happen, he became more convinced that since he had successfully eradicated the potential trouble-makers, he had also eliminated the possibility of the immediate outbreak of revolution. He paid little attention to the more disturbing signs, often signalled by his own Okhrana agents, that the despair and frustration of the workers might impel them to take action on their own, and that the discontent had spread to the garrison soldiers.

If Protopopov acted decisively in dealing with the workers' movement, he was more careful in his move against the liberal opposition. He shared with various archconservatives the opinion that the Duma should ultimately be dissolved and that a new election should be conducted in a way that would assure a right-wing majority. For that purpose he sent a circular in December to the governors, requesting information concerning the composition of the electorate in each province and the likely results if an election were held soon.¹⁹ On 2 February, he commented approvingly on Markov II's recommendation to change the electoral law in the same way that Stolypin had changed it on 3 June 1907. Immediately after the arrest of the Workers' Group, Nicholas entrusted Nikolai Maklakov with the job of composing a draft manifesto for the dissolution of the Duma and the preparation of a new election. Maklakov willingly fulfilled this task, stating in his letter to the tsar:

18 See Chapter 11.

19 Deposition of Protopopov, *Padenie* 1925, vol. 2, pp. 293–4.

More than at any other time power [*vlast'*] must be concentrated, convinced, and welded together by a single purpose to restore state order at any cost and must be confident in victory over the internal enemy which has long been growing more dangerous, more savage, and more impudent than the external enemy.²⁰

Maklakov accused the Duma of engaging in a 'political struggle against the government' instead of solving the practical problems facing a nation at war. Since the nation needed action, 'not speeches disturbing the people's spirit and shaking state order', the tsar was to order the dissolution of the Duma and set a new election for 1 December 1917.²¹

Protopopov, however, did not agree with Nikolai Maklakov on the timing of the dissolution of the Duma. As a former Octobrist, he was more aware of the volatility of the liberal opposition, within which rumours of a palace coup were widely circulating. An ill-timed dissolution of the Duma might push them to action. But he continued to take repressive measures against the liberal opposition. On 11 January, he sent the governors a letter instructing them to prohibit the local zemstvos and city dumas from discussing political questions. Also he attempted to undermine the effectiveness of the voluntary organisations by curtailing government subsidies and drafting employees of these organisations into the military. As mentioned above, he engineered the postponement of the Duma opening until 14 February, and organised a campaign against the liberal opposition, heavily subsidising right-wing organisations such as the Fatherland's Patriotic Union and the Union of the Russian People. A campaign of letters and telegrams, carefully orchestrated by the ministry of internal affairs, gave the tsar and tsarina the illusion that they were indeed supported by the overwhelming majority of the Russian people. Protopopov, however, avoided a major showdown with the liberals, and opposed the immediate dissolution of the Duma.²²

Protopopov's policy did not satisfy the reactionaries. Maklakov and Shcheglovitov criticised him as 'too soft' on the liberals, while those who accepted the liberals' demand for the establishment of a ministry of confidence believed that Protopopov was leading the government into a headlong collision with the opposition. The net result was the further disarray of the right wing and

20 Semennikov 1927, pp. 97–98.

21 GARF, f. 601, op. 1, d. 1003, ll. 1–2; E.D. Chermenskii 1976, p. 247.

22 Diakin 1967a, p. 269; according to Protopopov, Nicholas was contemplating the possibility of arresting Guchkov. Protopopov advised against it. GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 158.

the government. In fact, the government all but ceased to exist in the last two months of the tsarist regime. Relying more and more on his unofficial but more effective channel of political influence through Vyrubova and the tsarina, Protopopov stopped attending the meetings of the Council of Ministers. Golitsyn could not stand Protopopov, who had made him look like a fool on the matter of the postponement of the Duma session and unsuccessfully attempted to dismiss him by petitioning the tsar. But Protopopov was untouchable under the tsarina's protection.

The 'ministerial leapfrogging' continued. P.N. Ignat'ev, minister of education, was dismissed at the same time as Trepov. When the new minister, N.K. Kul'chitskii, was appointed on 27 January, two deputy ministers of the ministry of education resigned in protest at this third-rate appointment. The minister of war, D.S. Shuvaev, a critic of Rasputin, was fired also. The tsarina's obedient servant, M.A. Beliaev, was appointed in January. Some ministers went on sick leave with real or pretended illnesses. The minister of finance, P.L. Bark, had been off duty since December on sick leave and was in no hurry to return to the capital. His resignation or dismissal was rumoured in the papers. Also the minister of the navy, Admiral I.K. Grigorovich, fell ill, and was more often at home than in his office. The minister of trade and industry and the minister of foreign affairs, V.N. Shakhovskoi and N.N. Pokrovskii, expected to be dismissed because of their opposition to Protopopov. Only the ministers of agriculture and transport, A.A. Rittikh and E.B. Kriger-Voinovskii, continued to work energetically to solve the problems of food supply and transportation. The top-level bureaucrats in the ministries of education, justice, finance, foreign affairs, and trade and industry stopped working on major policy proposals because they had no idea how long their ministers would be in office. The high officials of the ministry of internal affairs did not know where to address their reports since Protopopov and his deputies refused to accept them. Two of his deputy ministers finally gave up and walked out on Protopopov. The post of deputy minister remained unfilled in the ministries of foreign affairs, justice, internal affairs, transport, and education. Thus, while the tsar helped to wipe away the tears of his grief-stricken wife, his government stopped functioning, leaderless and demoralised.²³

Sensing that the country was breaking apart at the seams, even the traditionally conservative elements of the nobility took an unprecedented step. On

23 It should be pointed out that during the war 'ministerial leapfrogging' was accompanied by 'gubernatorial leapfrogging'. In 1914 only 12 new governors were appointed, but in 1915 the number rose to 33, and in 1916 to 43. See Diakin 1967a, p. 275.

12 January, the assembly of the provincial nobility was convened in Novgorod and passed a resolution calling for the removal of the 'dark forces' from the government and stressing the importance of the unity of tsar and the people. The governor of Novgorod was immediately dismissed for having allowed such a resolution. But a similar resolution was adopted by the assemblies of provincial nobility in Simbirsk (Protopopov's own province), Iaroslavl', Samara, and Moscow provinces.²⁴

The Liberals Continue to Put Pressure on Nicholas

The erosion of the government's authority caused concerns with the allied diplomats. British Ambassador George Buchanan and French Ambassador Paleologue were in constant communications with the Duma liberals as well as the grand dukes. On 31 December, Buchanan had his last audience with the emperor, and made an unusual recommendation to change the way the emperor was conducting his business, at the risk of meddling in internal affairs. He suggested that the emperor rid himself of his wife's pernicious influence, fire Protopopov, and appoint a ministry of confidence to restore the confidence of his people. To this Nicholas replied: 'Do you mean that *I* am to regain the confidence of my people or that they are to regain *my* confidence?' Buchanan's desperate pleas fell on deaf ears.²⁵

It was Rodzianko who emerged as the rallying point for the discontented nobility and the grand dukes. He tried to mobilise them into concerted action to persuade the tsar to form a ministry of confidence. On 3 January Rodzianko asked A.D. Samarin, chairman of the Council of the United Nobility, and P.A. Bazilevskii, marshal of nobility of Moscow province, to meet him in Petrograd. Before this meeting Rodzianko had met with Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, Nicholas's brother. After his departure Rodzianko explained to the two Moscow nobles that the grand duke had agreed that two measures would be necessary to save Russia from the present situation: the formation of a ministry of confidence headed by Rodzianko himself, and the removal of the tsarina from politics. According to Rodzianko, the liberal forces could not be counted on. The Duma would sooner or later be dissolved, and constant government repression had rendered the Unions of Zemstvos and of Towns powerless. In his opinion, the United Nobility was the only remaining voice that could

²⁴ Rodzianko 1973, p. 256; Diakin 1967a, p. 296.

²⁵ Buchanan 1923, vol. 2, pp. 42–9.

influence the tsar. Rodzianko then requested that Samarin and Bazilevskii seek an audience with the tsar in an attempt to talk some sense into him.²⁶

On 7 January Rodzianko himself met with the tsar, but Nicholas was in no mood to listen to him and accused the Duma of being busily engaged in insidious propaganda against such a talented man as Protopopov. Three days later Samarin sought an audience with the tsar and presented the resolution passed by the Twelfth Congress of the United Nobility, which requested that the tsar appoint a ministry responsible to the tsar but willing to work in cooperation with the Duma. This recommendation also made no impression on Nicholas.²⁷

Bazilevskii's audience with Nicholas took place on 9 February. The marshal of the nobility of Moscow province described the desperate food problem in Moscow, the acuteness of which was evident merely by 'seeing early in the morning the queues in front of bakeries and listening to the complaints of women, who stand all night in the cold and go away empty-handed'. The tsar expressed the hope that the situation would soon be improved thanks to Rittikh's energetic efforts. Bazilevskii pointed out that the people no longer believed in a government that had brought the nation to such chaos, and presented to the tsar the resolution of the Moscow nobility calling for the formation of a ministry capable of cooperating with the Duma. Nicholas made no reply, changed the topic, and said at the end of the conversation: 'Tell them that no one is more grieved than I with the internal situation at such a moment when we must still fight with the enemy and when a close unity is necessary to deal him a final blow'. The tsar then politely shook hands and departed with his characteristic smile.²⁸

On the following day, 10 February, Rodzianko was again received by the tsar. In what turned out to be his last report, Rodzianko begged him not to dissolve the Duma, which alone, in his opinion, could prevent the outbreak of a revolution since it alone had a restraining influence on the people's passions. But Nicholas proved to be more aggressive than at the previous audience. Responding to Rodzianko's fear of an impending revolution, he said: 'My information indicates a completely different picture. As far as the mood of the Duma is concerned, if the Duma allows itself to make such sharp attacks as the last time, then it will be dissolved'. Rodzianko came home with the depressing feeling that nothing would change Nicholas's mind.²⁹ According to historian Start-

26 Dnevnik P.A. Bazilevskogo, OR RNB, papka IV, ed. khr. 1, ll. 78–9.

27 Chermenskii 1976, pp. 268–9.

28 Dnevik Bazilevskogo, ll. 89–91.

29 Rodzianko 1973, pp. 259–61; Deposition of Rodzianko, *Padenie 1927*, vol. 7, pp. 163–5; 'Dnevnik E.A. Naryshkina', *Poslednie novosti*, May 10, 1936.

sev, it was after this audience that Rodzianko became convinced that forcible removal of the emperor was required to carry out reforms.³⁰

Rodzianko and G.E. L'vov and Aristocratic Opposition

At the centre of all these collective pressures was Rodzianko. The conservative elements of society, sensing the impending storm, came to regard the moderation of the Duma's chairman as the last and only hope. Rodzianko, in turn, solidified his strength with the aristocracy to counterbalance his slipping popularity among the liberals. Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich provided him with a vital link to the rest of the grand dukes. Although Nicholas's brother worked closely with Rodzianko, he also kept in touch with another wing of the liberal movement represented by Prince G.E. L'vov, Rodzianko's rival. The link between L'vov and the grand duke was A.A. Klopov, a retired minor bureaucrat who had obtained the privilege of writing directly to the tsar. Klopov, who had recommended a dictatorship headed by General Alekseev at the end of 1916, in January 1917, suddenly began to advocate the formation of a ministry of confidence headed by Prince L'vov.³¹ Between 19 January and 13 February Klopov wrote a series of letters to the tsar, urging the formation of a ministry 'responsible to the tsar and to the people'. He also urged the tsar to make a personal appearance at the Duma on 14 February to symbolise his unity with his people. On 29 January and 6 February he obtained permission to have an audience with the tsar and expounded his opinions directly. Klopov's move was closely coordinated with L'vov and Mikhail.³² His petitions, however, met with Nicholas's stone wall, like all other petitions.

The frantic efforts of the grand dukes and the nobility to influence the tsar stemmed from their fear that disaster was imminent. Many awaited the opening session of the Duma with trepidation. The workers' demonstration was expected the same day, and rumours of a palace coup were rampant. On the morning of 14 February, Rodzianko hurried to see the acting chief of staff, General V.I. Gurko, and informed him that he had reliable information that a palace coup was being planned and would be carried out. Gurko immediately took a train to Tsarskoe Selo and requested an audience with the tsar. One of the court officials, Z.V. Arapov, was sitting in the next room. He heard nothing

30 Startsev 2005a, p. 201; Lyandres 2013, p. 285.

31 For the role of Klopov, see Diakin 1967a, pp. 245, 265, RGIA, f. 1099, op. 1, d. 16, l. 1.

32 RGIA, f. 1099, op. 1, d. 15, ll. 1–3, 8–9, 12, 13–25; *ibid.*, d. 20, ll. 1–4, *ibid.*, d. 17, ll. 1–2; *ibid.*, d. 3, ll. 1–2.

for the first fifteen minutes, then suddenly he heard Gurko's thundering voice: 'Your Imperial Majesty, you are wilfully preparing yourself for the gallows. Do not forget that the mobs will not stand on ceremony. You are ruining yourself and your family'. Nicholas's answer was inaudible, but in a few seconds Gurko stormed out of the room, pale and trembling, and muttered: 'We are done with'.³³

All the petitioners were struck by both the inflexibility and the calm with which Nicholas refused their recommendations. They would have understood better if the tsar had angrily dismissed them, deriding their softness toward the liberal opposition and threatening them for defying the autocrat. But they were baffled by his impeccable observance of court etiquette, by his patience, and by the personal charm he extended to them. Yet he refused to yield an inch. Many felt that an invisible wall separated them from the sovereign, who did not seem to comprehend what they were saying. In a way their impression was correct: after Rasputin's assassination, Nicholas was living in a world far removed from reality. There was something intensely personal in his understanding of the responsibility of a sovereign. To Nicholas politics could not be separated from his own personal morality and religion. While his critics presented a compromise with the Duma as a political alternative, to Nicholas there could be no such alternative, since it would strike at the heart of his moral and religious convictions. He could not accept it without breaking his sacred obligations to God.

Not long before the revolution, the tsarina attended a religious celebration in Novgorod. She was greeted with speeches by the governor and the city mayor, and the crowds at the railway station welcomed her with a thunderous hurrah. She remarked:

Apraksin always frightens me with all sorts of popular disturbances, and is convinced of some sort of dissatisfaction among the people. Now he heard how warmly people and the city mayor, not a government official, greeted me, and saw how much love could be felt in the people toward the tsar and his family.³⁴

The tsar and tsarina relied more and more on such organised popular support for assurance that the people and the tsar were still one. If one examines the

33 Dnevnik Z.V. Arapova, RO GBL, f. 12, papka 1, d. 9, ll. 85–7, quoted in Chermenskii 1976, p. 274.

34 B.A. Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvshii mir: Vospominaniia', OR GBL, f. 218, no. 306, ed. khr. 3, l. 82.

violent hostility expressed by common people recently compiled by Kolonitskii, one can easily conclude that the imperial couple were living in a world far removed from reality.³⁵

Nothing happened on 14 February to disturb the peace. It seemed to Nicholas that all these panic-stricken conservatives had fallen victim to alarmism. He was impressed with Protopopov for his sound advice and superb job of keeping the security of Petrograd. Relieved by this turn of events, and with the renewed faith in the minister of internal affairs, Nicholas finally decided to end his vacation and resume his duty as supreme commander in chief in Mogilev. On 22 February, after two months' stay, he left his family in Tsarskoe Selo. On the way, he dispatched a telegram to his wife: 'Am traveling well. In thought with all of you. Feel lonely and sad. Am grateful for letters. Embrace all. Good night. Nicky'.³⁶ By the time this telegram reached Tsarskoe Selo, the workers in the Vyborg District were out in the streets, demanding bread. The February Revolution had begun.

35 See Kolonitskii 2010, pp. 194–218.

36 Letters of the Tsar to the Tsaritsa 1973, p. 312.

The Security of Petrograd

Men in Charge of the Security of Petrograd

'Armed insurrection in some form or other', writes Katharine Chorley, 'is the classic method of making a revolution, and ... it is bound to imply a clash with professionally trained troops equipped with all the gear of scientific warfare'. Success or failure of a revolution 'hinges on the attitude which those armed forces of *the status quo* government will take toward an insurrection'.¹ An insurrection is not likely to succeed against a regime that can muster the full allegiance of its armed forces. Its success is possible only when the ineptitude of an existing regime reaches the point where it is unable to make use of its full military resources.²

Thanks to an abundance of accurate information dispatched by the omnipresent Okhrana agents, the tsarist government was by no means blind to the rapidly growing public furor against the regime. Anticipating major disturbances, the government began to take precautionary measures in late 1916. These measures, however, suffered basic weaknesses that clearly revealed that the senescence had gone so far that the regime was no longer capable of preserving itself.

The men in charge of the security of Petrograd in the civilian branch of the government were the minister of internal affairs, Protopopov, the director of the police department, A.T. Vasil'ev, and the Petrograd *gradonachal'nik*, Major-General A.P. Balk. But because Petrograd was designated as part of the theatre of war, civilian authorities were relegated to a secondary role and it was the military branch of government that was primarily responsible for maintaining the security of the city. At the end of January 1917, the Supreme Command separated Petrograd and vicinity from the front and formed an independent Petrograd Military District under the commander, Major-General S.S. Khabalov. Lack of coordination between the civilian and military authorities hindered effective enforcement of security measures. The difficulty was further compounded by the ambiguous division of jurisdiction between two military authorities, the commander of the Petrograd Military District and War Minister General M.A. Beliaev.

1 Chorley 1943, pp. 11, 16, quoted in Johnson 1966, pp. 99–100.

2 Brinton 1965, pp. 86–8.

At first glance one is struck by the mediocrity of those men to whom the safety of the largest and the most important city of Russia was entrusted. Unable to command respect even from his colleagues in the cabinet, Protopopov was a symbol of the regime's corruption and intransigence as well as the focus of public hatred for the government after Rasputin's death. Although he was aware of the danger of a mass movement, he believed that the elimination of the revolutionary underground would be sufficient to prevent a major disturbance. Vasil'ev owed his promotion to the director of the police department to his connections with Protopopov. Upon his appointment, Vasil'ev gave Protopopov his assurances: 'I shall never do anything behind your back; I shall always consult you and submit to your instructions'.³

Balk, former assistant to the chief of police in Warsaw, became Petrograd *gradonachal'nik* on Protopopov's recommendation, replacing Prince Obolenskii, who had lost favour with the tsarina and Protopopov. Obolenskii was, in Protopopov's opinion, 'too self-confident and inactive'. In addition, Alexandra was outraged by his sister's remarks attacking her close relationship with Rasputin. In November 1916, Obolenskii was dismissed, and Balk, Protopopov's classmate in the First Corps of Cadets, was appointed.⁴ Balk himself well knew that he was not qualified to fill this important position, but the offer was too good to refuse.

What mattered most, however, was the incompetence of Petrograd's military leaders, since they had the ultimate responsibility for security. The man who was in direct command of troops was Major-General Khabalov, who had spent his entire career in military administration without ever commanding troops on a battlefield. According to Balk, Khabalov was 'incapable of leading his own subordinates and, above all, of commanding troops'.⁵

Equally unimpressive was War Minister Beliaev, whom Nicholas once described as 'an extremely weak man who always gives way in everything and works slowly'. Like Khabalov, he had spent his entire military career behind the desk. The world war gave him a chance for rapid promotion. After serving as chief of the General Staff in Petrograd and a member of the Military Council, he was appointed war minister on 3 January 1917, replacing General D.S. Shuvaev, who had irritated the tsarina by his outspoken opposition to Rasputin. His narrow bureaucratic mind obviously could not compensate for Khabalov's inexperience. A.I. Verkhovskii, future minister of war in the Provisional Government, was more uncharitable:

3 Vassilyev 1930, pp. 143–6.

4 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, 161–2; Vassilyev 1930, p. 197.

5 Balk 1929 (Hoover), p. 5b.

Cold careerism and military illiteracy were combined in him with a supreme contempt for people and the willingness to sacrifice thousands of lives, if it was necessary for his personal success.⁶

Had Khabalov obtained assistance from capable officers, his inexperience might not have been catastrophic. In the formulation of security measures, it was assumed that Lieutenant-General A.N. Chebykin, who enjoyed the confidence of other officers, would take the actual command of the troops in Petrograd. Chebykin, however, fell ill in early January, necessitating Khabalov's hasty appointment of Colonel V.E. Pavlenkov of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment as a temporary replacement. This was a poor choice, since Pavlenkov, who had arrived in Petrograd from the front only at the beginning of February, 'was not familiar even with the topography of the capital and did not know at all the sentiments of the army units'.⁷ Moreover, Pavlenkov suffered a mild heart attack shortly before the outbreak of the February Revolution and had to conduct most business from bed. Khabalov thus found himself commanding troops without the help of more experienced field officers.

The Petrograd Military District and the Northern Front

These were the men in positions of major responsibility – mediocre, ailing, unimaginative, lethargic and incompetent. But the weakness of authority went deeper than the personalities of its leaders. It was essential that good communication existed between Petrograd and the high command at the front, for obviously if the disturbances went beyond the ability of the Petrograd authorities to handle alone, reinforcements would have to be brought in. But the relationship between Petrograd and the military leaders at the front was marred by hostility and distrust. One can trace this mutual animosity to the way the Petrograd Military District had been detached from the northern front.

It was inevitable that a conflict of interests would arise between the commander of the northern front, General N.V. Ruzskii, and the men in charge in Petrograd – Khabalov and Beliaev. As a front commander, Ruzskii regarded the transfer of necessary supplies and provisions from industrial regions in Petrograd to the front as the highest priority. On the other hand, Khabalov and Beliaev were concerned with provisions not only for the reserve unit but also

6 Nicholas, quoted in Pares 1939, p. 327; Martynov 1927 p. 61; Verkhovskii 1959, p. 145.

7 Akaemov 1917, p. xi; Khodnev 1997, p. 260.

for the workers in war industries. As the supply of goods, particularly foodstuffs and fuel, fell sharply during the first months of 1917, the two men in Petrograd began to complain bitterly, with legitimate reason, that Ruzskii was endangering the security of Petrograd by giving the front unduly favourable treatment. This was a matter of priorities that any country engaged in total war encounters and an efficient government would have made a rational readjustment of priorities without impairing the integrity of the government as a whole. Not so in Russia. Khabalov and Beliaev chose intrigue, employing the political influence of Protopopov and the tsarina, a *modus operandi* that was prevalent in the tsarist government.

Relations between Protopopov and Ruzskii had been strained since November when Ruzskii had objected to Protopopov's food policy. This objection had coincided with the liberals' outcry against Protopopov's policy and had increased the minister of internal affairs' suspicion of the 'liberal' commander of the northern front. It seemed more important to place the Petrograd Military District under his direct control, not subject to the military intelligence network. Ruzskii, on the other hand, reacted with irritation to Protopopov's meddling in military censorship. Declaring that military intelligence had different goals and purposes, he refused to downgrade it to a tool of the political police. As for the allocation of provisions, Ruzskii considered the Petrograd Military District a 'burden' to the northern front, and in principle did not object to its detachment from his jurisdiction. What he did object to was the way it was detached.⁸

Supporting Khabalov and Beliaev, Protopopov relayed their complaints to the tsarina, and engaged in a vicious attack on Ruzskii's character, while insisting to the tsar that for security reasons the Petrograd Military District should be separated from the northern front.⁹ Whether or not Alexandra's bedroom propaganda or Protopopov's argument as an expert on the security of Petrograd prevailed, Nicholas decided to detach the Petrograd Military District. It was the dubious manner in which this decision was made, more than the decision itself, that angered army leaders. If this incident reinforced their contempt of Protopopov and the tsarina, they were also embittered by the disgraceful conduct of Khabalov and Beliaev.

8 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 164; Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, pp. 202–3.

9 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 164.

Strength of the Security Forces

It is therefore not surprising that the elaborate contingency plan drafted by the Petrograd security authorities did not include assistance from the front. The security forces consisted of the police and the reserve soldiers. In Petrograd there were 3,500 policemen assigned to sixteen precincts. The police were singularly unpopular with the populace, who saw the oppression of the state not in actual laws and executive orders, but in their implementation by the police. It was obvious that 3,500 police would not be able to cope with large-scale labour unrest. Naturally, the security authorities hoped to rely on the enormous number of reserve soldiers stationed in Petrograd. Although the statistics do not provide an accurate figure, there were said to be between 160,000 and 271,000, made up of the following groups: reserve battalions of guard regiments, regular reserve infantry regiments (the First and the 180th), a bicycle battalion, an armoured car division, the Sixth and the Guards Sappers regiments, and other auxiliary units.¹⁰ The guard regiments were the most important of the security force in the capital. Altogether there were 99,000 guard soldiers assigned to fourteen battalions representing fourteen guard regiments.

The cavalry was divided into Cossacks, who numbered 3,200, and regular cavalry units composed of 4,700 soldiers. The soldiers in the technical units included a bicycle battalion, an armoured car division, engineer units, railway battalions and artillery units. There were approximately 10,000 military students in and around Petrograd. In addition to the soldiers stationed in Petrograd, the military authorities counted on the soldiers in nearby cities. There were 69,800 in Tsarskoe Selo to protect the Imperial Palace; 70,300 in Petergof, Oranienbaum, and Strel'na; 33,900 in Krasnoe Selo; and 21,700 in Gatchina. All were within thirty miles of Petrograd. Thus in Petrograd and its immediate vicinity there were perhaps 322,000 to 466,800 soldiers available.¹¹ The enorm-

10 Wildman 1980, p. 124. According to Wildman, the number of soldiers in Petrograd was 180,200, and 151,900 in suburbs. According to Martynov and Shliapnikov, the number of soldiers in Petrograd was approximately 160,000. Martynov 1927, p. 58; Shliapnikov 1923c, vol. 1, p. 160. According to Kochakov, it was 271,000. This figure is based on the data of the commissary section of the army and inflated, since it included servicemen in administrative units. Kochakov 1956, p. 61. According to the data given by the Military Commission of the State Duma, it was 170,000. According to the materials in the Extraordinary Investigation Commission of the Provisional Government, there were 180,000 soldiers as of 1 February 1917. See Burdzhakov 1967, pp. 96–7.

11 Kochakov 1956, p. 61; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 95; Wildman 1980, p. 124.

ous concentration of reserve soldiers in Petrograd warrants the statement: 'The whole city had been turned into a military camp'. This large number apparently gave the authorities the illusion that Petrograd was invulnerable to any internal threat.¹²

Contingency Plan of Security

Anticipating great labour unrest in response to the strike calls of various revolutionary organisations for 10 to 14 February, a military commission headed by Khabalov, but actually led by Lieutenant-General Chebykin, mapped out a contingency plan in cooperation with the *gradonachal'nik*. The city was divided into sixteen military districts, identical with the police precincts, and a battalion of guard regiments was assigned to each. The contingency plan would be carried out in three stages. In the first, police alone would cope with a disorder, with minimal assistance from the Cossacks. Since this stage was not considered a military situation, the *gradonachal'nik* would remain the commander of the security forces. If the police could not handle the situation, the second, military stage would be declared. The commander of troops in Petrograd would take over the command of all security forces from the *gradonachal'nik*, while in each district the commander of a guard battalion would replace the precinct police chief and command both police and soldiers. Guard battalions would be mobilised to assigned positions to safeguard public buildings, banks, palaces and railway stations from insurgents. At this stage, however, only cavalry units, mostly Cossacks, would be used for direct confrontation. The soldiers would be prohibited from using firearms except in self-defence. If measures taken at the second stage proved to be insufficient, Khabalov had the authority to proceed to the last stage. Infantry and guard units would then launch an all-out attack on the recalcitrant crowds, using firearms and machine guns. It was presumed that this last stage would be sufficient to suppress any disturbance. Curiously, the contingency plan did not mention when the authorities of Petrograd should seek forces from the front.¹³

12 Shklovsky 1970, p. 7; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 4.

13 GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, 1917 g., ll. 190–1; Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, pp. 534–39; Martynov 1927, pp. 63–5; Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1, p. 184; Supplementary deposition of Protopopov, Padenie 1925, vol. 4 pp. 92–93; Khodnev 1997, pp. 261–2.

Sources of Soldiers' Discontent

The government did not realise that the enormous number of soldiers in Petrograd was in itself a double-edged sword. As long as the army could maintain discipline, the government would not have to worry about the possibility of major disturbances. However, a swing in the soldiers' allegiance would radically alter the balance of power in the capital. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the soldiers came to harbour discontent with the war and the regime, and by February 1917, the army stationed in Petrograd and its outskirts was no longer reliable to prop up the dying regime. In fact, they had now turned into a flammable material ready to explode.

After the outbreak of war military authorities could no longer indulge in the luxury of carefully selecting the soldiers to be stationed in the major cities. After the most reliable guard soldiers were sent to the front, reserve guard units, once noted for their unswerving loyalty to the regime, came to be filled with dissatisfied soldiers in their forties, called *sorokoletnye*. They were embittered and disgruntled at having to abandon their families and adjust to the regimented life of the barracks. Another large group of reserve soldiers in Petrograd was made up of evacuees who had been sent back from the front because of illness or injury and reactivated into reserve units after a period of recuperation. After living close to death at the front and witnessing the corruption in the rear, these evacuees began to reflect upon whether the danger, fatigue, and loneliness at the front were justified. Their anti-war sentiment grew stronger as the day approached to depart again for the front.¹⁴

These frustrations and grievances were further aggravated by the petty regulations of the barracks. The dreariness and monotony, the dull repetition of drills, the strict enforcement of curfew and reveille, and the difficulty in acquiring a pass – all these contributed to a repressed anger. There was also an explosive element among the reserve soldiers: the presence of former strike participants. Prior to 1916, the government had carefully avoided recruiting politically undesirable elements into the armed forces, let alone assigning them to such important cities as Petrograd and Moscow. By early 1916, however, in the face of the resurgence in strikes, the government had begun drafting strikers as punishment. Scarcity of training facilities and difficulties of transportation forced military authorities to train the strike participants where they were drafted. The result was that although they were not politically organised or in touch with revolutionary parties outside, some soldiers had carried their subversive

14 Wettig 1967, pp. 82–3; Martynov 1927, pp. 29–30; Shklovsky 1970, p. 7.

ideas from the factories to the barracks. Chebykin himself acknowledged that the reserve battalions composed of factory workers were not reliable.¹⁵

The soldiers often reacted to the police with utmost hostility. The police were granted a deferment from military service. The soldiers felt that the 'Pharaohs', as the police were derogatorily called, beat up defenceless demonstrators instead of fighting the Germans. During confrontations between police and demonstrators, soldiers often ceased to be bystanders and attacked the police. One of the most famous of these incidents was the revolt of the soldiers of the 181st Infantry Regiment in October 1916.¹⁶ According to Colonel B.A. Engel'gardt, an Octobrist deputy of the Duma,

It was no longer the army in peacetime, united in strict discipline under the commanding officers, whose interests were closely connected with the existing system. – No, it was armed mobs capable at any moment of exercising their own will and their demands ... [The reserve battalions] were not military units, but rather hordes of armed people. Not united in discipline under commanding personnel, they were more reserves of flammable material than a prop of the regime.¹⁷

Of the many mistakes committed by security authorities in Petrograd, their failure to understand the sentiments of the reserve soldiers accurately was the most costly. The ministry of internal affairs had established an elaborate internal spy network in every area of civilian life. Okhrana agents dispatched amazingly accurate reports on the political tendencies of all civilian organisations, but their network did not extend to the military forces. Army intelligence and the Okhrana frequently worked at cross-purposes. The former were largely amateurs – such as former engineers or instructors from military schools – whose efficiency left much to be desired, and military authorities often ignored communications from the Okhrana. When Protopopov questioned the reliability of reserve soldiers shortly before the outbreak of the February Revolution, Khabalov replied: 'All troops will fulfill their duty', and rejected Protopopov's recommendation that some of the unreliable units be removed from Petrograd. This would be impossible, Khabalov replied, because there were insufficient barracks available outside Petrograd to house many battalions. In his opinion, the question of the reliability of soldiers was irrelevant, since he would use

15 Ivanov 1924, pp. 171–3; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 347/1917g, l. 33.

16 See Chapter 5.

17 Engel'gardt, OR GBL, f. 218, ed. khr. 3, pp. 101–2.

only training detachments to counter workers' demonstrations.¹⁸ He had no doubt about the reliability of these training detachments, which were designed to train non-commissioned officers. This argument, however, did not convince Protopopov, who recommended to the tsar that more dependable troops be brought to Petrograd. Nicholas then requested General Gurko, acting chief of staff,¹⁹ to send two cavalry divisions to Petrograd on leave status. Gurko rejected this request on the grounds that it would be physically as well as strategically impossible and sent instead a token number of naval service corps. Despite uneasy misgivings, Protopopov did not expect 'serious revolutionary tendencies' in the reserve battalions, and was convinced that in the event of labour disorder the government could find support in the troops, whose loyalty to the tsar he did not question.²⁰

The military units were by no means immune to politics. As mentioned above, the military authorities had adopted the policy of members of the revolutionary party activists and strike participants into the army. Furthermore, many officers and NCOs had political affiliations or were sympathisers of revolutionary parties. Although it is not clear whether these activist-soldiers and officers engaged in political activities, their presence in the military units provided a dangerous flammable element. Soldiers and officers had been exposed to political debates outside their military units. Especially since the latter half of 1916, the relentless campaign against the Empress, Rasputin, and corruption of the government, the Miasoedov affair, and rumours of German spies worming into the imperial court, partly triggered by Miliukov's famous 'treason or stupidity' speech, contributed to the anti-government sentiment among the soldiers and officers.²¹

The report presented to the Council of Ministers in the beginning of 1917 gives an interesting picture of the mood of the soldiers. Among the soldiers the rumour of German influence in the government and the imperial family spread widely, affecting their loyalty. The report predicted: 'it is possible that troops would take the side of a revolution and overthrow of the dynasty'. It is interesting to note that the soldiers read 'whatever they have their hands on', indicating that they were susceptible not only to the influence of the liberal press, but also to the propaganda literature smuggled by the revolutionary organisations.²² As Melancon emphasises, the left socialist parties,

18 Protopopov 1926, p. 190; Vassilyev 1930, p. 208.

19 General Alekseev was on sick leave.

20 Mints 1967, vol. 1, p. 469; and GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 178.

21 See Kolonitskii 2010, pp. 342–3.

22 Russkaia armiia nanakune revoliutsii, 1918, pp. 152–7.

especially the Mezhraiontsy and the left SRs, had been active in propaganda activities among army units.²³

Erosion of Officers' Loyalty

If military authorities had doubts about the reliability of the troops in the reserve battalions in Petrograd, they did not realise how far the loyalty of their officers had been eroded. Between April 1914 and January 1917 the number of officers in the Russian armed forces increased from 40,590 to 145,916, while the number of soldiers increased from 1.2 to 6.6 million. To appreciate the drastic increase in the number of officers, one must understand that the cream of the officers' corps had been annihilated in the first year of the war. By July 1915, officers' casualties had reached 60,000 – undoubtedly the result of the admirably gallant but unwise tradition of the officers' marching at the head of advancing troops. This means that by January 1917 the army had recruited 170,000 new officers and at the time of the February Revolution less than 10 percent of the officers were regulars.²⁴

The 60,000 casualties among the officers had two important consequences. First, replacements were of lower military quality. Thousands of retired officers were recalled to active duty. The Academy of the General Staff was closed, its students commissioned to command units or detailed to staff assignments, and almost three thousand soldiers who had the necessary educational qualifications were immediately promoted to officers' rank. A great majority of new officers, however, were graduates of accelerated courses in the military schools and the newly created ensign schools. The entrance requirements for these schools were lowered, and the accelerated courses lasted only four months. 'Probably there was no European army of the period', Peter Kenez states, 'in which the officers possessed as little general and military education as in the Russian'.²⁵ Such officers could not be expected to possess ability deserving the respect of the soldiers. Since better officers were immediately sent to the front, those who remained in the rear were either sick, or old or incompetent.

Second, the dire need of officers facilitated the democratisation of the officers' corps. Even prior to the war, the government had found it hard to main-

23 For the propaganda activities of the Mezhraiontsy and the SR-Internationalists, see Melancon 1990, pp. 257–62, Melancon 2000, pp. 25–8. It is difficult to establish how these propaganda activities affected the soldiers' actions.

24 Kenez 1973, p. 145.

25 Ibid., pp. 148–9.

tain its social exclusiveness – such prominent generals as Alekseev, Kornilov, and Denikin had all come from poor families. The war opened up the opportunities for aspiring young men of humble social origin for quick promotion in the Russian army. In 1916 only four percent of the junior officers came from nobility, while 70 percent had peasant backgrounds.²⁶ Unlike the senior officers brought up in the tradition of the Academy of the General Staff with emphasis on narrow military mind and ignorance of political currents outside the military, these junior officers brought into the army acute political consciousness. The officers' corps reflected more and more the sentiments of the liberal opposition: even some members of the revolutionary parties – such as V.B. Stankevich (right-wing Populist), S. Mstislavskii (SR), and A. Tarasov-Rodionov (Bolshevik) – could be found among the officers, despite the requirement of a security check before the commissioning of an officer. The officers' moods on the eve of the revolution will be described in Chapter 10, but it suffices to say that the majority of officers had deserted the regime long before the revolution.

Miliukov's 'stupidity or treason' speech served as a catalyst to solidify officers' opposition to the imperial couple and the government. A.A. Chikolini, first lieutenant in the 86th Infantry Regiment deployed in Petrograd, noticed a hand-written text of Miliukov's speech on the desk of the battalion commander in the officer's club of the Finland Regiment. When Chikolini asked him what would happen if revolution broke out, the battalion commander replied that his troops would not fire on the people and take to the streets. Chikolini observed: 'Even the old monarchist colonel, who had been in the trenches since 1914, became an ardent revolutionary after Miliukov's speech ...'²⁷

The report presented to the Council of Ministers gives a pessimistic prognosis about the officers' mood. The majority of officers in the Northern and Western Fronts reacted to some members of the government and Empress Alexandra with hostility, considering them to be under German influence. They were also critical of Nicholas for letting himself fall under the influence of the 'Germany party'. They rest their hope in the Duma as the most important moderate force 'in the case of revolution [perevorot]'. It reported: 'Never before in the society of officers, even in presence of commanding officers, have such open conversations about the possibility of the fall of the dynasty ever been heard.'²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., p. 179.

²⁷ Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 73.

²⁸ Russkaia armiiia nanakune revoliutsii, 1918, pp. 152–7.

In mid-January, Police Chief Vasil'ev brought a report to Protopopov concerning the mood of the officers in Petrograd. It gave accounts of two salons where officers gathered – that of Countess N.S. Sheremet'eva, where opposition-minded officers gathered, and that of Countess S.S. Ignat'eva, where right-wing officers met. But at both salons 'revolutionary speeches' were delivered and derogatory words were often spoken about the tsar. The liberal-minded young officers in the Baltic Fleet were talking about the possibility of a palace coup and swore to each other that in case of revolution they would defy the orders of the tsar.²⁹

What Crane Brinton calls the transfer of allegiance had already taken place among the soldiers and officers.

Superficially, in February 1917, Petrograd appeared to be in a position to withstand internal disruption. The city was fortified with an enormous number of troops, and security authorities had prepared elaborate plans to counter any serious disturbance. A close examination of the security measures, however, reveals that this appearance was deceptive. The men in charge lacked leadership, and the various agencies lacked coordination. Demoralisation, apathy, and resentment seeped through to the garrison troops. Behind an impressive facade, the structure was rotting from within. Only a small push was needed to topple it.

29 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, 179; see Chapter 10.

The Liberal Opposition

The Liberals Splinter in Various Directions

The crisis of power (*krizis verkhov*) that accelerated after the assassination of Rasputin and the sudden revitalisation of the labour movement pushed the liberal opposition even further into desperation. Some saw the powerlessness of 'words' and called for 'action'. But many dreaded cooperation with a mass movement. The centre of the Progressive Bloc, led by Miliukov, barely succeeded in maintaining the leadership of the liberal opposition, confining its activities within the parliamentary process. Miliukov's line represented the mainstream of liberal opposition, but he could no longer retain tight control over the liberals as a whole. On the eve of the revolution they were splintering into different groups. The most radical wing, particularly the lower echelon of the liberal workers in the voluntary organisations and municipal self-governments, began more actively to cooperate with the labour movement. The leaders of the Central War Industries Committee strove for a united action between the liberals and the workers' movement by exerting the influence of the Workers' Group on the Petrograd workers. Others began seriously discussing a plan for a palace coup to remove Nicholas from the throne. Frightened by this sudden radicalisation, its right wing, represented by Rodzianko, desperately sought to wring concessions from the tsar by mobilising the support of the grand dukes and the nobility. Everyone sensed that the storm was approaching, and even inevitable, and positioned himself to prepare for it. The competing authority between Miliukov and Rodzianko over the liberal movement and its direction was to play an important role during the February Revolution.

In a tense political atmosphere during the Christmas recess the liberal politicians held a series of meetings. On 21 and 22 December the Central Committee of the Kadet party held its plenary conference. Responding to the growing demand for direct action advocated by the lower echelon of the party, Miliukov obstinately defended the continuance of parliamentary tactics.¹ Unlike the Kadets, who ultimately accepted Miliukov's policy, the Progressists advocated a more radical one. On 30 December they gathered at P.P. Riabushinskii's apartment in Moscow and adopted a resolution not to accept the expected dis-

¹ Diakin 1967a, pp. 288–9.

solution of the Duma. According to their plan, the Duma delegates would be asked to reassemble in Moscow and issue an appeal to the nation and the army to support the defiant Duma against the government.² But the other parties in the Progressive Bloc reacted to this appeal coldly, considering it a parody of the disastrous 'Vyborg appeal', in which the liberal Duma deputies in the First Duma had attempted to persuade the nation to show a passive resistance to the government's dissolution of the Duma. In the meantime, Konovalov was actively involved in organising closer cooperation with the leaders of the workers' movement and held a series of conferences with moderate socialists in Petrograd and other cities to form a Left Bloc.³

Konovalov was also busy on the other front as well. During the Christmas recess he initiated a diplomatic mission to representatives of the bureaucracy to sound out the possibility of mobilising support among an enlightened element of the bureaucracy for a liberal campaign to form a ministry of confidence by contacting Krivoshein, Bobrinskii, and A.S. Taneev.⁴ Presumably they agreed in principle for the need to remove Protopopov and composed a list of candidates for a ministry of confidence acceptable to both camps. But beyond that nothing specific came out of these meetings.⁵

On 7 January the government announced that it had decided to postpone the opening of the Duma until 14 February – another humiliation to the liberals. On the same day, at the initiative of the Kadets, the representatives of the liberal opposition, including the Octobrists, the Progressists, and the Trudoviks, met at Konovalov's apartment, and discussed what action they should take in response to the government's decision. The Progressists insisted on the abandonment of parliamentary tactics, and proposed that the Progressive Bloc should present an ultimatum to the government immediately,

2 Grave 1927, p. 165. It is worth keeping this scenario in mind in view of the Duma deputies' conduct after the February insurrection took place on 27 February.

3 Chermenskii 1976, p. 233.

4 Maklakov and D.A. Ol'suf'ev served as Konovalov's intermediaries. Ol'suf'ev, an Octobrist, was an elected member of the State Council, and the original member of the Progressive Bloc. A.S. Taneev was the Director of Imperial Chancellery, and ironically, the father of Anna Vyubova.

5 How this mission came about is not known, but this policy was opposed by the Moscow Kadets. GARF, f. DPOO, d. 27, ch. 46, 1916 g., l. 60; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917, l. 1; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 307a, t. 2, 1916 g., ll. 76v–76g; GARF, f. DPOO, 1917 g., d. 669a, ll. 2–3; for Maklakov's letter to Konovalov, describing his meeting with one of the representatives of the bureaucracy, see GARF, f. DPOO, op. 343ZS, 57ch/1917 g., ll. 20–22. See also Gaida 2003, p. 259; Glinka 2001, pp. 174–5.

demanding the convocation of the Duma. If the government refused to comply with the demand, the liberals should boycott the Duma entirely. Konovalov was supported by Kerenskii. Rodzianko strenuously objected to this radical position. 'It is necessary', he insisted, 'to maintain our self-control to the end, and whatever the cost, to fulfil our duty before our fatherland and the electors'. Opposing the proposal of an ultimatum to the government, he advocated that the liberals open the Duma session with sharp attacks on the government in the manner they had opened the previous Duma session on 1 November 1916. Vasilii Maklakov also considered it premature 'to throw down the gauntlet to the government and seek a path of non-parliamentary struggle'. In his opinion, the task of the liberals was still to unify the forces of society in opposition to the government. Only if the Duma were dissolved should 'the first page of a new Russian Revolution be opened'. Maklakov declared that there was no substantial disagreement between the radicals and the moderates in the liberal opposition. All were convinced that 'a revolutionary path is inevitable'. The disagreement revolved around the question of when they should open this struggle. Maklakov's view was wishful thinking, however. It was impossible to find a middle ground between the radicals and the moderates in this meeting, and in the end the representatives decided not to adopt a rigid plan at that point.⁶

Maklakov's statement at this meeting demonstrated the powerlessness of the moderate liberal opposition. Forced into a corner, even Maklakov, situated more to the right than Miliukov, felt that a revolution might indeed be at hand. Nevertheless, they decided not to act, fearing that a decisive act against the government might touch off a mass movement they knew they could not control. A radical action would also split the Progressive Bloc – a result the liberals could ill afford, since the disintegration of the Progressive Bloc would mean the loss of the focal point of the liberal opposition. But the Progressive Bloc was gingerly moving in the direction of thinking about a contingency plan in case the revolution was to break out.

Arrest of the Workers' Group and the Liberals

At the beginning of January the Workers' Group began a campaign among the Petrograd workers to organise a strike and mass demonstration on 14 February, the opening day of the Duma, to urge the Duma liberals to assume a more decisive leadership. Konovalov and Guchkov supported the new radical direction of

6 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 27, ch. 46, ll. 60–62; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 171/ 1917 g., ll. 63–6.

the Workers' Group in the hope that the group would recapture its previous strength in the workers' movement, exert a moderating influence, and serve as a link between the workers and the liberal opposition. This hope, however, was crushed when Protopopov's police arrested the leaders of the Workers' Group on 27 January. Two days after the arrest Guchkov called an emergency meeting of the liberal politicians and the activists of the workers' movement in the Central War Industries Committee. Altogether thirty-five to forty persons attended the meeting, including Guchkov, Konovalov, Abrasimov (the remaining member of the Workers' Group, who was a police spy), Kerenskii, Chkheidze, Miliukov, three members of the Moscow War Industries Committee, and the representatives of the Unions of Zemstvos and of Towns.

The first speaker, Miliukov, shocked the participants by his hostile speech against the Workers' Group. In Miliukov's opinion, the Duma should and could be the only centre of opposition against the government. No other organisation and no other class should have the right to act independently of the Duma. Miliukov attacked the involvement of the Workers' Group in politics, which went far beyond its competency under the law. In particular, he criticised its appeal to the workers to stage a demonstration in front of the Tauride Palace on 14 February. Such demonstration would be easily suppressed by the government and give Protopopov a further excuse for repressive measures not only against the workers' organisations but against the liberal opposition as well.

Miliukov's speech should not be taken to indicate opposition to revolution from below. Since the summer of 1915, he had steered the Progressive Bloc and the Kadet Party in a moderate direction, adamantly refusing to adopt the demands of a responsible ministry not because he was against revolution from below, but because he feared that the liberals' radical demands would touch off a revolution that they could not control. By insisting on a ministry of confidence, he did not expect cooperation with the government. This demand was, on the one hand, to serve to expose the rotten core of the government, and on the other, to boost the prestige of the Progressive Bloc as the only alternative to replace the government. Especially after the 'stupidity or treason' speech on 1 November, he had sensed, as Maklakov did, the inevitability of the approaching storm. If revolution were to come, his task would be to control it. In January 1917, a radical Kadet member, M.L. Mandel'shtam, proposed to Miliukov that the liberals should declare the Duma at the opening to be a constituent assembly. To this Miliukov replied: 'We will do it if we have a few regiments at the Tauride Palace.'⁷

7 Quoted in Gaida 2003, p. 258.

Miliukov's speech, however, immediately provoked an angry outcry. Guchkov and Konovalov defended the Workers' Group for its service to national defence by intervening in conflicts between capital and labour. Miliukov's colleague in the Kadet party, M.S. Adzhemov, attacked his party leader for his strictly legalistic point of view. If Miliukov's accusations of the Workers' Group were justified, all the other voluntary organisations, such as the Unions of Zemstvos and of Towns and the War Industries Committees, were guilty of political involvement beyond their legal competency. 'A blow to the Workers' Group is in fact a blow to the entire Russian society', Adzhemov continued, 'The arrest of the Workers' Group weakens the entire system of the forces of society in the country'. Kerenskii supported Adzhemov, urging the Central War Industries Committee to take up the challenge thrown down by the government and fight. Chkheidze criticised Miliukov for being a man of words and not of action. He warned that Miliukov would 'one beautiful day find himself behind the tail of events, since if everything continues as it is, it is easy and inevitable to see only the workers alone at the head of the political offensive and events'. Professor Zernov of the Central War Industries Committee insisted that it was time to act. It was necessary, he argued, to create a centre to coordinate all classes of society before the opening of the Duma to begin an open and decisive struggle with the government. Prince N.N. Drutskoi indirectly proposed the creation of an illegal underground organ through which the opposition could transmit its decisions to the leading circles of the masses. P.N. Perverzev of the Moscow War Industries Committee supported this idea. In conclusion, the meeting adopted a proposal made by Zernov, Adzhemov, and Perverzev that a second meeting of the representatives of the opposition be held in the near future to discuss the political problem facing the nation, to create a special organ to inform the wide masses of the decisions and the intentions of the leading circles of the opposition, and to elect a committee to serve as a centre for all opposition activities.⁸

Obviously, moderates like Miliukov were outnumbered at this meeting. The Octobrists and other right-wing parties in the Progressive Bloc had not been invited. The Progressists and the socialists, who had been frustrated by Miliukov's inaction as leader of the Progressive Bloc, unleashed their pent-up frustrations. Despite the resolution adopted at the meeting, however, Guchkov and Konovalov made no attempt to call a second meeting. Presumably they con-

8 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 34 3ZS, 57 ch/1917, ll. 15–17; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 347, 46/1917, ll. 16–17; GARF, f. DPOO, op. 5, 669a, ll. 17–19; Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, pp. 180–4. This Okhrana report, with slight variations, was presumably written by Abrasimov.

cluded that with the destruction of the Workers' Group the last chance to link the liberal opposition to the workers' movement was gone. Nevertheless, it is important to note that many liberals were moving in the direction of accepting a revolution.

The only action that the liberal opposition took in reaction to the government's arrest of the Workers' Group was Guchkov's open protest letter, which he made public on 30 January and in which he refuted the charges brought by the government against the group. In Guchkov's opinion, contrary to the government's accusation that the Workers' Group secretly advocated revolution, in his view it represented a more moderate wing of the workers' movement and constantly sought peace between labour and capital for the sake of national defence. If the Workers' Group had become involved in politics, that reflected the worsening political condition of the nation. Guchkov stated that the Central War Industries Committee, whatever disagreements it had with the Workers' Group, shared with it the opinion that the existing government, which had brought the country to the current political crisis, would be incapable of achieving a victory over the external enemy.⁹ Beyond this protest letter, neither Guchkov nor Konovalov did anything to reestablish contact with the workers' movement. Deprived of that vital link, they sensed that the workers had gone beyond their control and henceforward relied exclusively on the possibility of a palace coup to effect a political change.

The Radical Liberals Form a United Front with Workers

This did not mean, however, that the liberals on the whole abandoned attempts to establish a united front with the workers. Since the summer of 1915, the rank-and-file activists of the voluntary organisations and municipal self-governments had attempted an alliance with the leaders of the workers' movement. In their practical work they had established a close working relationship with the activists of the workers' movement. The more these liberal activists became involved in work to alleviate the misery of the poor, the more convinced they became of the impossibility of continuing their work without a fundamental restructuring of the state system.¹⁰

9 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 347, 46/1917, ll. 27–8; RGIA, f. 1276, op. 13, d. 34, 2; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 280–3.

10 For the radical actions of the rank-and-file liberal activists in 1915, see Chapter 3.

On the eve of the February Revolution food distribution had become a common cause for which the radical liberals took united actions with the moderate socialists. Since the summer of 1915 the social service organisations of the city duma had been involved in the welfare programme for the poor. From the workers' side, the Workers' Group had launched a campaign to create local food committees. These two movements from two different directions merged and demanded the creation of local committees consisting of all classes and groups of society. The liberals participated in the cooperative movement and created many organisations that included the workers as well as other classes of society. It was also reported that the Union of Zemstvos attempted to establish an organ for legal assistance to the masses, an attempt that an Okhrana agent saw as the radical liberals' effort to contact the masses.¹¹

Although only fragments of evidence are available, it appears certain that the radical activists of the liberal opposition became more actively involved in efforts to form a united front with the workers on the eve of the revolution. They were not successful in capturing a broad segment of the masses, but it is important to note that at the lower level there was substantial understanding and cooperation between radical liberals and moderate socialists. In January an Okhrana agent reported that the left-wing liberals had already given up the possibility of a moderate approach. They pessimistically predicted that the country was headed toward 'the inevitable experience of spontaneous and even anarchistic revolution'. When that happened, 'there will already be no time, no place, and no basis for the realisation of the Kadets' programmes', and that would be the point where 'there will be a basis for the transformation of Russia into a state free from tsarism, created on new social foundations'. On 18 January, another Okhrana agent reported that the left-wing Kadets now openly advocated a policy 'to take part in a revolution in order to organise a new "healthy" government, which could finish off the existing system, even in the form of its replacement by a democratic republic'.¹²

Right-Wing Liberals

If the dangerous possibility of the explosion of a mass movement prompted the left-wing liberals to move further to the left, the same prospect led the moderates to act more cautiously. On 18 January, despite the radical elements' demand

11 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 471–2; GARF, f. DPOO, op. 343ZS, 57 ch/1917, ll. 9, 11, 13.

12 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 307a, to. 2, 1916 b., 76g; *ibid.*, d. 171/1917, l. 30.

for a boycott, the Budget Committee of the Duma resumed its normal function. The conservative representatives of the Duma and the State Council in the Special Council for Defence entertained the idea of convening all the special councils with Nicholas's participation, and presenting at this joint meeting a petition to the tsar for a ministry of confidence. This proposal was approved by an overwhelming majority at the meeting of the Special Council for Defence, but its chairman, War Minister Beliaev, refused to submit this decision to the tsar. He instead recommended to the tsar not to convene such a meeting and not to be caught in the trap set by the liberals by attending the meeting of the Special Council for Defence.¹³

In the meantime, the Central Committee of the Kadet party met on 4 and 5 February for the last time before the February Revolution. The left Kadet Adzhemov advocated the position that the Kadets should support the workers' demonstration on 14 February. N.K. Volkov opposed Adzhemov, arguing that the demonstration might provoke the government to close down the Central War Industries Committee. Rodichev also shared the opinion that the government was waiting for a chance for a bloody suppression of the entire opposition movement. He expressed fear that the 14 February demonstration might lead to the kind of repression they had seen on Bloody Sunday in 1905. Miliukov agreed, saying that widespread sympathy among the workers in favour of the Workers' Group's call for a demonstration unfortunately did not exist. The demonstration would fail, in his opinion, unless it was organised by the police itself. A majority of the Kadets supported Miliukov's opinion that the Kadets should exert their utmost influence to dissuade the workers from participating in the demonstration.¹⁴

As for the tactics in the forthcoming session of the Duma, Adzhemov and Nikolai Astrov proposed that the Progressive Bloc undertake a sharp attack on the tsarina at the opening session. Miliukov and Rodichev, on the other hand, insisted on a 'business-like' tone and opposed any political declarations. The Kadets in the end accepted Miliukov's opinion, and decided 'not to deploy a frontal attack against the government on the first day'.¹⁵ This position was even more moderate than the one advocated by Rodzianko in January. Miliukov's moderation, however, came not from the fear of revolution itself, but his desperate attempt to control it under the leadership of the Progressive Bloc.

13 Diakin 1967a, p. 294; Chermenskii 1976, p. 267; Rodzianko 1927, p. 259.

14 Chermenskii 1976, pp. 264–5. This account is based on the minutes of the Central Committee of the Kadet party on 4 February 1917, RO GBL, f. 229, op. 1, papka V, ed. khr. 23a.

15 Diakin 1967a, p. 295. This is based on the archival material cited in fn. 14.

On 10 February in the Kadet paper, *Rech'*, Miliukov's open letter to the workers was printed side by side with Khabalov's proclamation to the workers. Miliukov suggested that the appeal to stage a demonstration on 14 February in support of the Duma might have originated in 'dark forces' under the influence of Germany. If the workers responded to this provocation, they would in fact play 'into the hands of the enemy'.¹⁶

Miliukov's policy to take no action against the government was prompted partly by fear that it might provoke a mass movement and partly by concern that support of the workers' movement would split the Progressive Bloc. The Octobrists had already been resentful of 'Miliukov's dictatorial manner'. To maintain unity in the Progressive Bloc, Miliukov had a series of meetings with various members and had moved further to the right through these meetings to keep the Octobrists in the Bloc. An Okhrana agent noticed the growing influence of Miliukov on Rodzianko and Shul'gin.¹⁷ Like the Kadets, the Progressive Bloc as a whole decided not to make an attack on the government on the opening day of the Duma. Miliukov flatly rejected the suggestion made on 13 February by a Kadet, V.A. Obolenskii, and supported by left-wing Kadets, that the Progressive Bloc present a petition to the tsar on the opening day, requesting the formation of a responsible ministry. Such a move, in Miliukov's opinion, would be unconstitutional.¹⁸

The inaction of the Progressive Bloc led some of the liberals, notably Guchkov, Konovalov, and Prince L'vov, to believe that the only alternative open to the liberals would be a palace coup. On the eve of the opening of the Duma a rumour of a palace coup was spreading throughout Petrograd.¹⁹ Sensing the danger in this adventurous course and attempting to recover his slipping popularity among the liberal circles, Rodzianko was busily involved in attempts to mobilise the grand dukes and the nobility to persuade the tsar to form a ministry of confidence. He had established connections with various quarters, among others with the military leaders. His request to have an audience with the Emperor was repeatedly rejected, but on 10 February he managed to secure the audience where he pleaded not to prorogue the Duma, and implement internal reforms by establishing a ministry of confidence; he predicted that otherwise Russia would plunge into a revolution in three weeks, an uncannily accurate prediction. Nicholas rejected Rodzianko's plea. This was the last

16 P. Miliukov, 'Pis'mo v redaktsiiu', *Rech'*, 10 February 1917, p. 3.

17 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 27, ch. 46/1916, l. 58.

18 Chermenskii 1976, p. 273.

19 For various rumours of a palace coup, see Kolonitskii 2010, pp. 352–74.

audience that Rodzianko had with Nicholas, the audience that convinced the Chairman of the Duma to side with drastic actions to remove the tsar.²⁰

Aware of their own powerlessness, the liberals hoped that if internal pressure could not change the government's reactionary policy, external pressure from the Allies could be brought to bear. For this purpose they made a concerted effort to recruit the Allied representatives, who had assembled in Petrograd to attend the Inter-Allied Military Conference from 29 January to 7 February. While the French ambassador, Maurice Paléologue, had a close association with the grand dukes and the conservative elements of the Progressive Bloc, the British Ambassador Buchanan, as discussed in the previous chapter, had an audience with the tsar at the end of the year, but Nicholas brushed aside his advice.²¹

The Allied delegations arrived in Petrograd on 16 January. They were received enthusiastically by liberal circles, which threw a series of banquets in their honour. Behind the scenes the liberals met separately with Lord Milner, the British chief representative, and G. Doumergue, his French counterpart, and requested their intervention in Russian internal matters. But the allied delegates refused to interfere in Russia's domestic politics.

The Duma Opens a New Session

On 14 February, the Duma opened the new session. The workers responded with a one-day strike, but failed to stage a large-scale demonstration in front of the Tauride Palace in support of the Duma. The much talked-about palace coup did not take place. All in all, the opening day of the Duma was an anti-climax. The liberals were in disarray and did not know what to do. Rodzianko's opening statement was marked more by his sharp attack on the workers' demonstration than by criticism of the government.

Immediately after Rodzianko's opening statement, the minister of agriculture, Rittikh, exercised his ministerial prerogative and asked for the floor. He spoke of food distribution, defended his policy of requisition (*razverstka*), and asked for the cooperation of the Duma in his effort to solve the critical problem. Rittikh's move forced the Duma to begin its session with a discussion of food supply and distribution in a 'business-like' manner, and forestalled any possibility of Duma delegates attacking the government on a broader political

20 Arkhipov 2000, 64–6; Lyandres 2013, p. 285.

21 Buchanan 1923, vol. 2. pp. 45–50.

question. Moreover, the government's choice of focusing on the food supply was a strategic success, since the Progressive Bloc was hopelessly divided on this question.²²

Ironically, in contrast to the Duma, the usually more conservative State Council took a defiant stand against the government. On the opening day the left wing and the centre of the State Council walked out in protest against the appointment of Ivan Shcheglovitov as its chairman without giving him a chance to end his opening speech. When Guchkov, newly elected to the State Council, made his first speech on 21 February, it was received enthusiastically.²³

The mood of the liberals was one of demoralisation and despair. Only Miliukov remained undaunted, and criticised those who demanded action. 'Our word is already our action', Miliukov insisted, 'The word and the vote are still the essence of our single weapon'. But many of his colleagues did not believe in this. A member of the Progressive Bloc, A.I. Savenko, noted: 'The deputies wander around like emaciated flies. No one believes in anything. Everyone's hands are down. All feel and know their powerlessness. The situation is hopeless'.²⁴

Attack on the government came only from the left. On the second day of the reopened session on 15 February, Kerenskii demanded the overthrow of the 'tyrants' and criticised liberal inaction:

I say to you that your speeches on the necessity of calm at all costs are either the naive sentiments of superficial thinkers or just an excuse to avoid the real fight, just a pretext to stay safely in your armchairs ... You don't want to listen to anybody but yourselves but soon you will have to listen, for if you do not hear the warning voices, you will encounter the harsh facts.²⁵

On 22 February, the Duma deputies attended the funeral of their colleague, M.M. Alekseenko, former chairman of the budget commission. As the coffin

22 Diakin 1967a, p. 316; Chermenskii 1976, pp. 276–7.

23 'V Gos. Sovete (zasedanie 14 fevralia)', *Rech'* 15 February 1917, 5; 'V Gos. Sovete (zasedanie 20 fevralia): Vystuplenie A.I. Guchkova', *Rech'*, 21 February 1917, p. 4.

24 GARF, f. 670, op. 1, d. 439, l. 6; Chermenskii 1976, p. 277; Arkhipov 2000, pp. 66–8. Savenko, a right-wing nationalist, who became the leader of the All-Russian Nationalist Union in 1912, later joined the Progressive Bloc, and severed his ties with monarchists before the February Revolution.

25 'K stroii poslednikh dnei tsarskogo rezhima' 1926, pp. 245–6. Kerenskii quoted in Pearson 1977, p. 137.

was brought out of the Tauride Palace, Shul'gin could not dispel the gloomy thought that Alekseenko might after all be the fortunate one, for he would not have to see what was coming.²⁶

It seems to be no accident that on 22 February, police recorded an unusually high number of suicides among the upper class.²⁷

The death knell sounded also for Russian liberalism. The February Revolution was only one day away.

26 Shul'gin 1990, pp. 154–5.

27 GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669 (1917 g.), l. 279. Pearson states that a few days before the February Revolution, the Octobrists 'abandoned pretensions to independence and threw themselves on the mercy of the government'. In Pearson's opinion, 'with the defection of its largest fraction, the Progressive Bloc was finished'. Pearson 1977, p. 138. It is unlikely, however, that the Octobrists formally quit the Bloc. In fact, on 27 February Shidlovskii still continued to act as its formal head. The Octobrists' eagerness to cooperate with the government was nothing new and does not seem to represent any turning point in the history of the Progressive Bloc.

The Liberals, Conspiracies, and the Freemasons

Conspiracies for a Palace Coup: Prince L'vov's Plot

On the eve of the February Revolution rumours of a palace coup were circulating widely in Petrograd. There is no need to record all the references, since by the end of 1916 it had become fashionable at salons and clubs to speak against the government, and most of the talk about a palace coup was nothing but gossip, wishful thinking, or rumour.¹ But there were two groups of conspirators who apparently went a little beyond salon talk.

The first group centred around Prince G.E. L'vov. According to the émigré historian, S. Mel'gunov, who was the first historian to focus on this obscure question by collecting material and interviewing those involved in the conspiracies, L'vov early in the war had begun to doubt Nicholas's ability to lead Russia to victory.² He became directly involved in the conspiracy for a palace coup in November 1916, when he proposed to General Alekseev joint action to remove the pernicious influence of the empress. Although Nicholas and Alexandra trusted the Chief of Staff, General Alekseev had become concerned about the growing influence of the tsarina and Rasputin in internal politics. Empress Alexandra had once suggested to Alekseev that Rasputin be invited to the Stavka, but Alekseev had indignantly rejected the idea, declaring that if Rasputin set foot in the Stavka, he would resign his post. In November 1916 there was a rumour that the empress was planning to come to live with the tsar at the Stavka to exert a stronger influence on him. According to Mel'gunov, this finally led Alekseev to support L'vov's plan to remove the tsarina from the political scene.

The plan was to arrest her in the train on her way from Tsarkoe Selo to Mogilev, deport her to the Crimea, and force the tsar to form a ministry of confidence headed by L'vov. This plan was to be executed on 30 November. But before that date Alekseev fell ill, and took a leave from the Stavka to convalesce – ironically in the Crimea, where the empress was supposed to be banished. When L'vov came to the Crimea to confer with Alekseev, the latter

¹ See Kolonitskii 2010, pp. 344–74; Engel'gardt interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 57. See also Gaida 2003, pp. 252–7.

² Mel'gunov 1931, p. 91; Aronson 1962, p. 123.

then refused to see him and rejected his proposal for a palace coup. Mel'gunov believes that Alekseev rejected L'vov's second proposal, since that proposal, which might include the forcible removal of the tsar himself, went further than he could tolerate.³ Alekseev's involvement in L'vov's conspiracy, as explained by Mel'gunov, is based on hearsay and is difficult to substantiate with historical evidence.

Presumably Prince L'vov was involved in another plot. On 9 December 1916, after the police refused to permit the All-Russian Congress of the Unions of Towns and of Zemstvos to be held, a small group of conspirators headed by L'vov gathered in his apartment. At this meeting, attended by N.M. Kishkin (Kadet), M.M. Fedorov (Zemgor leader), and A.I. Khatisov, mayor of Tiflis and chairman of the Caucasian branch of the Union of Towns, L'vov revealed another plan for a palace coup that would remove the emperor and install Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich in his place. The conspirators were to use a small guard unit led by sympathetic grand dukes to arrest the tsar and deport him abroad, while they were to incarcerate Alexandra in a monastery. L'vov revealed to those present that the army's support for this plan had been assured by General A.A. Manikovskii. The conspirators accepted L'vov's plan, and entrusted Khatisov with the delicate task of recruiting Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, former supreme commander in chief and viceroy of the Caucasian front, into the conspiracy.⁴ When Khatisov revealed L'vov's plot to the grand duke, Nicholas's famous cousin did not reject the idea outright, but raised two questions. He asked how people with deep monarchist sentiments would react to the forcible removal of the tsar, and he wondered about the possible reaction of the army to such an act. The grand duke asked for two days to think it over. When Khatisov returned two days later, Nikolai Nikolaevich answered that he had decided not to join the plot, since his assistant, General Ianushkevich, believed that the soldiers would not understand such an action.⁵ Thus L'vov's second plot collapsed in its initial stage. As Kolonitskii points out, it is interesting to observe that Nikolai Nikolaevich did not cite his allegiance to the tsar as the reason for the refusal.⁶

3 Mel'gunov 1931, pp. 94–102; Denikin 1921, vol. 1, pp. 37–9. For a different interpretation, Lyandres 2015, pp. 98–133. Lyandres believes that the main purpose of L'vov was not a palace coup, but rather to persuade the high command to choose him as the head of a ministry of confidence.

4 Mel'gunov 1931, pp. 105–17.

5 Ibid., pp. 108–9. See also Lyandres 2015, pp. 98–133.

6 Kolonitskii 2010, p. 507.

Guchkov Plots a Palace Coup

Guchkov was the leader for another, more serious, conspiracy for a palace coup. Early in October, a meeting of the leaders of the Progressive Bloc was held in the office of Mikhail Fedorov, a Moscow industrialist and a Kadet. Among the participants were Miliukov, Vasilii Maklakov, Shingarev, Konovalov, Tereshchenko, Nekrasov, and Guchkov. At this meeting Guchkov revealed the idea of a palace coup, but the Kadets, led by Miliukov, strongly opposed it. The meeting adjourned without reaching any decision. After the meeting, however, Nekrasov and Tereshchenko came to see Guchkov, and expressed their agreement with Guchkov that a palace coup should be attempted. They formed a committee of three later to become a committee of five, joined by Prince V.L. Viazemskii, an officer of the Life Guard Cavalry Regiment, and Captain D.V. Kossikovskii of the First Cavalry Division. The involvement of the two officers made Guchkov's plot more serious than L'vov's plots. The Committee of Five elaborated a plan. It was agreed that they would seize the imperial train along the railway line between Tsarskoe Selo and Mogilev, possibly near a village formerly owned by Alexander I's notorious adviser, Aleksei Arakcheev, in Novgorod Province, when the Tsar travelled between the imperial palace and the Stavka. Prince Viazemskii was entrusted with mobilising the guard unit stationed in this village for the plot. Kossikovskii, who was the officer for the First Cavalry Division stationed in the Arakcheev barracks in Krechevitsy, contacted Colonel B.A. Engel'gardt, who was to become the head of the Military Commission during the February Revolution. Guchkov and his co-conspirators were careful to avoid bloodshed, and not to trigger a coup that could lead to the revolt of the common soldiers.⁷

On 27 January, a meeting of 'public figures' took place. Presumably, a palace coup was discussed, but not all the participants were committed to Guchkov's

7 Lyandres 2013, pp. 272–5; Mel'gunov 1931, pp. 148–54; Guchkov, 'Vospominaniia', *Poslednie novosti*, 13 September 1936; Deposition of Guchkov, *Padenie* 1926, vol. 6, pp. 261–2; Guchkov 1993, pp. 17–19; Arkhiplov 2000, pp. 61. Guchkov noted this in his letter to Mel'gunov written after the revolution: 'I did a great deal for which I could have been hanged, but little of real achievement, because I could not succeed in involving anyone from the military'. Mel'gunov 1931, p. 149. This testimony was contradicted, however, by interviews with Engel'gardt, Nekrasov, and Tereshchenko. Engel'gardt interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 57, 64. For Nekrasov's involvement in the plot, see Lyandres 2013, p. 143. Kossikovskii's involvement was first revealed by Tereshchenko, when his testimony was first introduced by Lyandres in 2013. Lyandres 2013, pp. 272–3. According to another version, General A.M. Krymov was involved in the plot, and was supposed to come to Petrograd to recruit some army units for the coup.

plan, although it is important to note that ‘they declared it impossible to remain neutral in the event of a coup d’état’.⁸ Two other meetings of ‘public figures’ took place, at a restaurant, Medved’, on 20 February, and at the secret apartment rented by Guchkov on Troitskaia Street on 21 February. Miliukov and Shidlovskii argued that they should not take an active role in any coup during the heightened political crisis until the dust settled. But those who advocated a palace coup insisted that they should initiate a palace coup on the grounds that nothing would be gained by the events accomplished by others. ‘A bear’s killer does not permit others to share the hide’, they argued. The conspirators mapped out a concrete plan: since Nicholas had left for Mogil’ev on 22 February, the day of operation was set for early March.⁹ But before the conspirators could take action, the February Revolution broke out.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Semion Lyandres traced the collection of interviews, known as the Polievktov interviews, and translated all the interviews in English. In addition, Lyandres used Russian archives that became open to the researchers after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He argues that, contrary to the prevailing interpretation that Guchkov’s plot did not involve military officers, Kossikovskii played a central role in the plot, indicating its seriousness. Moreover, the plot did not end up with a thud, interrupted by the outbreak of the February Revolution, but rather blended into the revolutionary process. Engel’gardt’s involvement was hinted at in his interview, and also during the night of 26 to 27 February, ‘several hours before the outbreak of the soldiers’ uprising’, a detachment of two squadrons of the First Cavalry Division, consisting of two hundred cavalymen, arrived in Petrograd. They were quartered in the barracks of the Life Guards Cavalry Regiment near the Tauride Palace. On 27 February, they began patrolling a small, but strategically crucial area between the intersections of the Nevskii, Liteinyi Prospekts and Sadovaia Street. On the basis of archives, Lyandres argues that ‘the cavalymen did not join the insurgency, maintaining discipline and cohesiveness during the rest of their twenty-four hour deployment in the capital’.¹⁰ More interestingly, Lyandres discovered the archival evidence that indicated that the Duma Committee’s Cavalry Squadrons were ordered to return to their original barracks in Krechevitsy near Novgorod, but remained in Chudovo, which was in between Tosno and Malaia Vishera. As I will explain later in Chapter 23, if the imperial trains were to proceed to Tsarkoe Selo, Chudovo

8 Tereshchenko interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 251.

9 Tereshchenko interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 252.

10 Lyandres 2013, p. 275.

would have been a crucial place. The emperor and his entourage decided not to proceed to Tsarskoe Selo, and turned the trains back to Bologoe.¹¹ Lyandres argues:

[T]he presence of a reliable and mobile cavalry force strategically located at Chudovo should be viewed as a necessary precaution by the competent and well-organised plotters-cum-revolutionaries. That this force consisted of the same squadrons (and under the command of the same able and decisive officer) that were originally designated to carry out the coup suggests that a key part of the plotters' plan, including Nicholas' arrest, could still have been implemented almost forty-eight hours into the revolution.¹²

Interpreting the Plots for the Palace Coup

Historians differ on the question of how seriously one should take these conspiracies. To Katkov they represented one of many attempts by Russian liberals to overthrow the tsarist regime, and he saw in the February Revolution the fruition of their plots. To Chermenskii, they were nothing but the idle chitchat and wishful thinking of disgruntled liberals, who were neither willing nor able to carry out a coup because they were afraid of the revolutionary movement. Diakin granted that the two groups represented by L'vov and Guchkov had gone further than mere talk, but states that L'vov's plot had collapsed before January 1917, and that although Guchkov's plot was more serious than L'vov's, it did not go beyond the 'embryonic stage'.¹³

During the Soviet period, another Soviet historian, V.Ia. Laverychev, presented the most interesting viewpoint. Laverychev believed that Guchkov's group, which included not only Nekrasov and Tereshchenko but also Konovalov and Efremov, had seriously contemplated staging a coup to depose the tsar in early 1917. But for the successful operation of their coup, the conspirators had needed the following conditions: (1) an agreement with authoritative representatives of Nicholas's relatives, (2) the consent of the military leaders, and (3) the backing of the leading liberal circles. The conspirators had run into various obstacles. First, their plot for a palace coup was strongly opposed by many liberal leaders

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 276–7.

¹² Ibid, pp. 277–8.

¹³ Katkov 1967, pp. 173–7, 215–17; Chermenskii 1967, Section 4, pp. 147–58; Chermenskii 1969, pp. 73–9; Chermenskii 1976, pp. 238–45; Diakin 1967a, pp. 298–304.

such as Miliukov and Rodzianko. Second, the tsarist government had avoided serious confrontations with the liberals – a measure that had given the moderate liberals an illusion that a compromise with the government could be made. Before January 1917, the conspirators had secured none of their conditions. After the government's arrest of the Workers' Group, however, the conspirators had revived their discussions, but could not agree on the exact timing for a coup. When the strike movement began to expand rapidly, particularly after 14 February, they had tried to avoid a coup as long as the workers remained stirred up. They had hoped that the wave of strikes would soon subside, as it had in the past. As it turned out, a palace coup was already impossible in February; the only chance for its success would have been in January, but 'the political inertia and the limitations of the Russian bourgeoisie made it impossible for the conspirators to take advantage of this opportunity'. In conclusion, Laverychev made a startlingly unorthodox remark during the Soviet period, usually not accepted by Soviet historians:

In the definite historical moment this conspiracy objectively aided the struggle of the proletariat for the overthrow of the monarchy. The conspiracy hastened the development of a revolutionary crisis and became one of the reasons for the quick victory of the February Revolution.¹⁴

Using the Polievktov interviews with major participants in the February Revolution, Lyandres further advances our understanding of the conspiracies for a palace coup by elaborating on the role of Nekrasov and Tereshchenko, and shedding light on the role of Captain Kossikovskii. Lyandre's discovery reinforces my interpretation that the idea of a palace coup became integrated into a part of the process of the February Revolution.

Miliukov and the mainstream Kadet members were not involved in Guchkov's plot, fearing that such a coup might touch off a revolution from below. On 3 February, Engel'gardt talked about the possibility of a coup with Shingarev and Miliukov. He posed the hypothetical question of what they would do if someone shot the tsar in a field hospital. They sifted through suitable names to head a palace coup, and the names of L'vov, Guchkov, Miliukov, Polivanov, and Shigarev came up. Shingarev excused himself from the plot, but Engal'gardt was in favour. 'It was decided to force the "boy" [Aleksei] to sign a document prepared in advance', Engel'gardt testified, 'to form a [ruling] council around him made up of Rodzianko and Polivanov as well as the ministers Prince L'vov

¹⁴ Laverychev 1967, pp. 81–6.

... Miliukov, and Guchkov'.¹⁵ It is important to note that whether or not they were actually involved in a plot for a palace coup, most liberals knew about the plot and were ready to take over the government once the revolution broke out. Miliukov was asked why the Duma was not going to take power. He answered: 'Bring us two regiments to the Tauride Palace and we will take power'.¹⁶

The Police and the Plots for a Palace Coup

Interestingly, the existence of the conspiracies, though not the details, was well known to the police and the government. Major-General K.I. Globachev, director of the Okhrana, reported to Khabalov on 19 January that 'our domestic Yuan Shih-k'ai' in the group of Guchkov, Konovalov, and L'vov intended to take advantage of unexpected events for their personal ambitions. A week later Globachev wrote a more specific warning that a group led by Guchkov, L'vov, S.N. Tret'iakov (a Moscow industrialist and member of the Progressist party), Konovalov, and Mikhail Fedorov:

regard as unachievable their dream of seizing power under the pressure of the demonstration of the masses of the population, and all the more rest their hopes exclusively on the conviction of the inevitability in the near future of a palace coup, supported at least by one of the two army units sympathetic with this group.¹⁷

Nicholas entertained the notion of arresting Guchkov, the central figure of the conspiracies, but Protopopov, who believed that his arrest might provoke a more dangerous reaction than the conspiracy, talked him out of it.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the police sent agents to keep the conspirators under surveillance. If the police had information of the arrival of the squadrons of the Guard Reserve Cavalry Division from Krechevitsy, this information never reached the *gradonachal'stvo*, since several hours after their arrival, Petrograd was engulfed by the soldiers' uprisings. Knowing the existence of conspiracies and yet unable to move against the liberal conspirators revealed the dysfunctional quality of the security authorities.

¹⁵ Engel'gardt interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 58.

¹⁶ Quoted in Arkhipov 2000, p. 60; Gaida 2003, p. 258; for Miliukov's reaction to the conspiracies, see Miliukov 1978, p. 22.

¹⁷ GARF, f. DPOO, op. 1917, d. 669a, ll. 10, 14.

¹⁸ GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 158.

The High Society and the Conspiracies

Also significant was the extent to which a wide segment of society, even those who supported monarchical principles, believed and accepted as a lesser evil the possibility of a palace coup. Grand Duchess Mariia Pavlovna¹⁹ suggested to Rodzianko the notion of the forcible removal of the tsarina, and was severely reprimanded by the Duma Chairman for such carelessly uttered irreverent remarks. Grand Dukes Nikolai Mikhailovich and Aleksandr Mikhailovich also suggested the possibility of a palace coup to none other than the prosecutor of the Petrograd Circuit Court, S.V. Zavadskii, who in turn did not conceal his sympathy for the idea.²⁰

When the marshal of the nobility of Moscow Province, P.A. Bazilevskii, arrived in Petrograd on 6 February, Prince Volkonskii, former deputy minister of internal affairs and the marshal of nobility in Petrograd Province, described the tense mood in Petrograd and hinted that 'a decisive event must be started from above without the knowledge and participation of the people'.²¹ The pervasiveness of such rumours and the secret desire to welcome a palace coup indicate that Russian aristocracy had deserted Nicholas even before the revolution broke out.

The High Command and Conspiracies for a Palace Coup

Since no liberal conspirators were prepared to throw bombs by themselves, an important element in their plots was the military. But with the notable exceptions of Krymov, Viazemskii, and Kossikovskii, and perhaps Engel'gardt, no one else in the military seems to have directly been involved in the plot.²² The military's refusal to join a plot for a palace coup did not mean, however, that they stood firmly behind the tsar and his government. On the contrary, the military leaders also watched the deteriorating political situation with growing concern. Judging from General Alekseev's correspondence with Guchkov, L'vov's overtures to him concerning a palace coup, and his alleged initial support for L'vov's proposal, Alekseev's sympathies seem to have rested with the liberal opposition. According to Denikin, Alekseev opposed a palace coup, but

19 Maria Pavlovna of Mechlenburg-Schwerein married Grand Duke Vladimir Aleksandrovich, third son of Emperor Alexander II. Her salon was one of the most popular in Petrograd, where many disgruntled relatives of the imperial family often gathered.

20 Rodzianko 1973, p. 243; Zavadskii 1923, pp. 40–1.

21 'Dnevnik Bazilevskogo', OR RNB, f. 15, p. 87.

22 Whether General A.A. Manikovskii was involved in the plot, and if so, to what extent, is not clear. But his name was mentioned as a possible candidate for the military dictatorship at the private meeting of the Duma members on 27 February. See Chapter 18.

he opposed it not because he was unswervingly loyal to the tsar, but because 'at the time of war' such a drastic change would seriously affect the war effort. Alekseev's temporary replacement, General V.I. Gurko, appealed directly to the tsar to carry out internal reforms. General N.V. Ruzskii, commander of the northern front, allegedly said after the revolution that, had he known of such a plot, he would have joined it. General A.A. Brusilov, commander of the southwestern front, also presumably declared: 'If I had to choose between the Emperor and Russia, I would follow Russia'.²³ Admiral A.I. Nepenin of the Baltic Fleet was said to have thought over the possibility of a palace coup on many sleepless nights. Even Nicholas's cousin, Nikolai Nikolaevich, took two days to think about the possibility of joining L'vov's plot, although he rejected it in the end. It seems clear that the high command was vaguely aware of a plot, and sympathised with it, but refused to join the conspirators. One must remember that the highest echelons of the High Command more than the officers below them had to uphold the oath of allegiance to the tsar, not to the fatherland.²⁴ Alekseev could not cross this barrier. And yet even these highest commanders of the Russian military had already shifted their allegiance to the fatherland, and psychologically prepared to jettison the emperor to whom they had pledged allegiance. The irony of the war for national salvation in which the nation did not exist was revealed fully in this psychology.

Mystery of the Masonic Conspiracies

Another curious aspect of Russian wartime politics was the role of the Freemasons. In 1967 George Katkov presented the thesis that the February Revolution was partly inspired by the conspiracies of the Masonic organisation. According to Katkov the Masonic lodges were created in the autumn of 1915 explicitly for the political purpose of overthrowing the tsarist regime. The members of this secret organisation had infiltrated everywhere – the bureaucracy, the voluntary organisations, and the political parties from the Kadets to the Bolsheviks.

Also the Freemasons were behind every conspiracy for a palace coup. The leaders of the masonic organisation were Kerenskii, M.I. Tereshchenko, N.V. Nekrasov, Konovalov, and I.N. Efremov. The military branch of the movement was headed by the Duma deputy, Count A.A. Orlov-Davydov, who main-

23 Mel'gunov 1931, p. 156; Rodzianko 1973, p. 245.

24 'Kliavennoe obshchanie', Muzei revoliutsii (Moscow).

tained relations with both Kerenskii and Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich, also a Freemason. 'The division between the initiated and the uninitiated cut straight across all party boundaries', Katkov continues, 'Party allegiances and party discipline had to yield to the stronger tie of the Masonic bond'. When the Provisional Government was composed during the February Revolution, it was created under the influence of the Masonic pressure group.²⁵

When I published the first edition, I made two points on the interpretations of the Masonic organisations. First, the existence of Masonic organisations and the Masonic ties of some influential political activists during the war appear to be undeniable. Second, historical evidence concerning the Masonic movement during the war is still so limited that, as Nathan Smith stated, any assumption on its role is not only 'provisional' but 'somewhat premature as well'.²⁶ Although any definitive conclusion is still premature, it appears that the new evidence that has appeared since then seems to confirm the existence of the Masonic organisations and the significant role of the Masonic ties among the leading figures during the February Revolution.

Mel'gunov argues, and Startsev confirms, that a strong Masonic movement appeared after the 1905 Revolution. Various lodges were established in Russia as branches of the French Masonic organisation. The lodge *Astre* was created in Moscow, and two lodges, the *Northern Star* and the *Cosmos*, were established in St. Petersburg with the participation of notable intellectuals, scholars, lawyers, journalists, and artists.²⁷ But Stolypin's police put these organisations under close surveillance, and they closed the organisation in 1911.²⁸

Apparently, avoiding police detection, the Masonic organisation was revived in secrecy. According to Startsev, in 1911, a Masonic organisation with clear political orientation, the Supreme Council of Peoples of Russia [*Verkhovnyi Sovet narodov Rossii*], was founded for the purpose of uniting all the opposition forces, regardless of differences among political parties, for the overthrow of autocracy and the introduction of the democratic republic in Russia. The lodges

25 Katkov 1967, pp. 163–73. Soviet historians generally kept silent on the issue of the masonic movement, with the exception of N.N. Iakovlev, who accepts Katkov's thesis in his book intended as a rejoinder to Solzhenitsyn's *August, 1914*. But Iakovlev's masonic references obviously invited the ire of the authorities, and his book was immediately removed from the bookstores in the Soviet Union. See Iakovlev 1974, pp. 3–19.

26 Smith 1968, p. 604. This is a translation of part of the unpublished memoirs of V.A. Obolenskii with Smith's commentary.

27 Mel'gunov 1931, pp. 181–3; Aronson 1962, pp. 112–13, Startsev 1980, p. 121; Startsev 1994, pp. 18–23.

28 Startsev 1980, p. 121; Startsev 1994, pp. 18–19.

were created in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and possibly in other cities. There were several lodges in St. Petersburg, but the most successful one was the lodge in the Fourth Duma. Startsev asserts that the Duma lodge included not only Kadets (Shingarev and Nekrasov) and Progressists (Konovalov and Efremov), but also Trudoviks (Kerenskii) and Mensheviks (Chkheidze, Chkhenkeli, and Skobelev). Thus already prior to the war, the essential core that was to unite the members of the Provisional Government and the Soviet Executive Committee during the February Revolution had been formed.²⁹

The Masonic organisation saw further development during the war, especially after the political crisis of 1915. The Duma lodge expanded to include Prince G.E. L'vov from the Union of Zemstvos. Konovalov and Tereshchenko from the Central War Industries Committee joined the lodge. The Duma lodge became connected with the Zemstvo organisations and the Central War Industries Committee. The Supreme Council held an annual congress, and elected its leadership, and general and executive secretariat. According to Startsev, at the turn of 1916 and 1917, the leadership of the Supreme Council was taken over by Kerenskii, Tereshchenko, Nekrasov and Konovalov.³⁰

According to E.D. Kuskova, an active member of the movement and a political activist of long standing, who had taken a position between the liberals and the moderate socialists, the new Masonic organisation had no connection with foreign lodges, had abolished all rituals and mysticism, and was political in nature. It was designed to revive the Union of Liberation, the liberal organisation before and during the 1905 Revolution, and to work underground for the liberation of Russia. She explained that the Masonic form of organisation was necessary to recruit into the political movement members of the bureaucracy and the imperial court who would never have joined any open liberal political organisation. Secrecy was one of the most important characteristics of the Masonic movement. Each member who was initiated in a lodge swore, in sacramental language, absolute secrecy and willingness to sacrifice his or her life (women were also admitted) for truth and freedom. Each lodge consisted of five members and had no knowledge of the existence of other lodges. All lodges were connected with a higher body, a regional council, and regional councils with the highest organisation, the All-Russian Convention, which elected the Supreme Council consisting of three members.³¹

²⁹ Startsev 1980, p. 122; Startsev 1994, pp. 18–23.

³⁰ Startsev 1980, p. 122; Startsev 1994, pp. 18–23.

³¹ Kuskova's letter to N.V. Vol'skii, 15 November 1955, in Aronson 1962, pp. 119, 138; Smith 1968, p. 606.

Another characteristic of the Masonic organisation was that its members were drawn from various political groups of totally different political ideologies and persuasions. In addition to Kuskova and her husband, S.N. Prokopovich, the following political figures were said to be members: Prince L'vov (Kadet), Kerenskii (Trudovik), Nekrasov (left-wing Kadet), Vasilii Maklakov (right-wing Kadet), Chkheidze (Menshevik), N.D. Sokolov (former Bolshevik lawyer), Konovalov (Progressist), Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich, and Tereshchenko (chairman of the Kiev War Industries Committee, non-party). According to Kuskova, at least two Bolsheviks were also members.³²

According to Semion Lyandres, the Duma-based lodge, the Supreme Council of the Grand Orient of the Peoples of Russia, had existed since 1909. This lodge included Kerenskii, Nekrasov, and Konovalov as its core members. Chkheidze was also a member, and from outside, Tereshchenko joined the Duma trio. Although Lyandres also includes another socialist Duma deputy, M.I. Skobelev, and socialist-leaning lawyer, N.D. Sokolov and a socialist writer and publicist, N.N. Sukhanov, future leaders of the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee, their membership is not confirmed.³³ If Lyandres' assertion is correct, then the Masonic ties were significant in establishing the personal network that united some important leaders of the Duma Committee and the Provisional Government with the leaders of the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee.

Kuskova claims that the influence of the Masonic organisations was enormous. Its 'own people' were everywhere: the Free Economic Society and Technological Society were completely taken over, and the Mining Institute was under its strong influence. Although Katkov accepts Kuskova's contention at face value, there is no evidence to verify her claim.³⁴ Two leading figures of the liberal movement, Rodzianko and Miliukov, were not involved in the Masonic organisations. The Octobrists, perhaps because they were considered too conservative, were outside the orbit of the Masonic organisations. Miliukov was approached, but he refused to join saying: 'I hate any kind of mysticism'.³⁵

32 Aronson 1962, p. 110. Obolenskii denies the importance of the Bolsheviks. He states that he knew only one minor Bolshevik who was a member of the Masonic organisation. Smith 1968, p. 606. See for Nekrasov interview Lyandres 2013, p. 143.

33 Lyandres 2013, pp. 143, 157, 167, 221–2, 245, 249.

34 Kuskova's letter to Vol'skii, 15 November 1955; and Kuskova's letter to L.O. Dan, 12 February 1957, in Aronson 1962, pp. 139, 141. Kerenskii denies that the Masonic organisations played an important part in the revolution. See Kerensky 1965, pp. 87–9. For Kerenskii and the Masonic organisations, see Berberova 1969, pp. 311–16. Katkov 1967, pp. 172–6.

35 Mel'gunov 1931, p. 186.

Even if one accepts the existence of the Masonic network encompassing various organisations and political parties, as Kuskova claimed, it is unlikely that its members were united by coherent political programmes. Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich's letters to his friend, Frederic Masson, make it clear that he firmly stood for the monarchist principle.³⁶ In the Progressive Bloc's discussions during the war, Maklakov, on the one hand, and Nekrasov and Konovalov, on the other, always found themselves at opposite poles. Despite Katkov's contention that the Masonic bond was stronger than party discipline, one of the leaders of the Petrograd Masonic organisation, Obolenskii, states: 'I cannot imagine that it [the Masonic organisation] played a large role in revolutionary events because its members came from various mutually hostile political parties whose internal cohesion was very much stronger than Masonic "fraternity"'.³⁷

Although it remains mere conjecture, the crux of the entire question of Masonic conspiracies appears to be nothing more than the personal relations that were established between some – not all – of its members, particularly Kerenskii, Nekrasov, Tereshchenko, Konovalov, and Efremov. About these men it is possible to speak, as Katkov does, of a personal bond stronger than 'party discipline and allegiance', although this bond was not merely a Masonic tie. Nekrasov championed the cause of the left-wing Kadets, who advocated the Progressive Bloc's abandonment of parliamentary tactics and the unification of the liberal opposition with the workers' mass movement. Konovalov and Efremov, the leaders of the Progressist party, likewise became disenchanted with Miliukov's moderate leadership of the Progressive Bloc. Having finally walked out of the Progressive Bloc, they began to advocate closer cooperation between the liberals and the workers' movement. Konovalov and Tereshchenko were the early advocates of the participation of the Workers' Group in the War Industries Committee. Kerenskii, on the other hand, became increasingly wary of the violent workers' movement, and believed that it should be restrained within a certain framework to help the liberals with the common struggle against tsarism. All these five men shared two basic political goals of the moment. First, in view of the powerlessness of the Progressive Bloc and other voluntary organisations to lead the struggle against the tsarist regime, it would be necessary to create a centre for the opposition movement that would combine both the liberal and the radical left-wing forces. Second, a mass uprising would be dangerous and should be avoided. To control an explosive mass movement, the creation of a

36 Nicolas Mikhailovitch 1968, *passim*.

37 Smith 1968, pp. 607–8.

centre would be imperative. These 'five' were thus deeply involved in attempts to establish a Left Bloc in October 1916.³⁸ The Masonic bond undoubtedly facilitated their efforts, but what brought them together were common political goals.

Nevertheless, the Left Bloc never went beyond a loose personal association of the radical intelligentsia, and never became a cohesive political body that could influence the workers' movement. It is possible to speculate that the group of 'five' then concluded that the only way to effect a political change without a popular uprising would be through a palace coup. Nekrasov and Tereshchenko cooperated with Guchkov in plotting a palace coup.³⁹ It seems unlikely, contrary to Katkov's assertion, that all the members of the Masonic organisations were deeply involved in this conspiracy, but it seems certain, and not surprising, that political figures like Nekrasov, Tereshchenko and Konovalov had finally come to choose a palace coup as the only viable alternative. The conspiracies for a palace coup and the Masonic movement grew out of the despair and powerlessness of the Russian liberals on the eve of the revolution, and their search to find ways to connect with the leaders of the left. Guchkov and at least two of the 'Masonic five' – Nekrasov and Tereshchenko – believed that after all other means had been exhausted, a palace coup would be the only way to avoid a revolution, while Miliukov and other liberals, including Maklakov, an alleged member of the Masonic organisation, opposed it for fear that such a coup might touch off a cataclysm they could not control.

The Masonic network did exist, but it appears that its role cannot be exaggerated too much.

38 See Chapter 6.

39 Mel'gunov 1931, p. 193; Shul'gin 1925, pp. 127–9.

The Workers and Revolutionary Parties

Workers are Starving: The Food Supply Crisis

The crack in the dike that eventually let the deluge sweep away the old regime was the shortage of food, which reached an alarmingly acute stage in the third winter of the war. When Protopopov's food policy ended in fiasco in October 1916, Nicholas appointed A.A. Rittikh the new minister of agriculture. Rittikh, an able administrator who had once worked under Krivoshein, immediately began working energetically to solve the problem. On 29 November he launched a programme of requisition (*razverstka*) that imposed a procurement quota on each province, district, and village. Although this programme was interrupted by the February Revolution and not given a chance to reach completion, signs of its failure were already apparent. The programme obviously conflicted with the interests of the producers, who applied considerable pressure for the quota to be lowered. Even before the requisition was put into effect, the quota was lowered to 89 percent of the original plan prepared by the Special Council for Food Supply at the provincial level, 63 percent at the district level, and finally 52 percent at the village level. Moreover, producers gained another concession from Rittikh in raising the fixed price higher than the original plan. In addition, the stated purpose of the requisition policy was to provide the army and the war industries with food. The task of feeding the general population – among whom the shortage was most acute – still remained in the hands of the local self-governments.¹

Although Rittikh travelled from one province to another in January and February 1917 to drum up support for his programme, the food supply in Petrograd not only did not improve, but it got worse. On 13 February 1917, Petrograd *gradonachal'nik* Balk petitioned Golitsyn to improve the transfer of flour to Petrograd. He revealed that in the last week the shipments of flour had been reduced to 5,000 puds a day under the norm of 60,000 puds (1 pud = 16.38 kilograms or 36 pounds). By 14 February, the reserves of rye flour in Petrograd had dwindled to 664,000 puds, and of wheat flour to 50,000 puds. This was barely enough to last twenty days on the assumption that each person would receive one funt (0.90 pound or 409.4 grams) of flour a day. With this amount the gov-

1 Kondrat'ev 1922, pp. 108–9.

ernment was supposed to feed the two-and-a-half million people of Petrograd for at least two months.² Within ten days after 14 February the reserves of flour further dropped by 36 percent or to 460,000 puds of rye and wheat combined.

The supply mechanism in Petrograd suffered from the existence of two conflicting authorities. The commissioner of food supply under the *gradonachal'nik* was formally responsible for the distribution of food in the city. But since the *gradonachal'stvo* did not have resources and personnel to handle the job, the practical tasks of food supply were entrusted to the Food Supply Commission of the city дума. As the situation worsened, conflicts between the two authorities arose. Both the city дума and the *gradonachal'nik* tried to stop further deterioration of the food situation. The commissioner of food supply attempted to limit the consumption of flour by banning the baking and sale of buns, pies, cakes, and cookies; the city administration prohibited the sale of meat during *Maslenitsa* (a three-day religious holiday). To protect the dwindling reserves the *gradonachal'nik* prohibited the Petrograd Union of Consumers from selling flour to the workers' consumer cooperatives and the workers' dining halls – a policy that angered the workers.³ On the whole, the *gradonachal'stvo* reacted lethargically and failed to adopt effective measures to improve the situation.

Dissatisfied with the inaction of the *gradonachal'stvo*, the liberals demanded that the entire food supply be handed over to the city дума. The city administration finally endorsed this demand, while V.G. Groman and Petr Struve, representatives of the Union of Towns in the Special Council for Food Supply, advocated the transfer of the food supply matter completely to the municipal self-governments. Another policy that was strongly advocated by the liberals was the introduction of rationing. At the meeting on 13 February, the city дума unanimously approved the proposal to introduce rationing. In mid-February the delivery of rye flour dropped to a new low, and that further drained the reserves of the city administration. Faced with a crisis and constant pressure from the liberals, the *gradonachal'nik* and the military authority finally decided to adopt a rationing system, which was to be introduced at the beginning of March. After this decision was made on 19 February, rumours spread that food rationing, restricting the per capita consumption of bread to one funt a day, would be introduced in the near future. This caused a panic. Enormous queues formed in front of bakeries, and there were scattered incidents of attacks on bakeries.⁴

2 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 15, d. 48, l. 72; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 17.

3 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 26.

4 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 33; Document 1, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 17.

The effects of the food supply crisis were most vividly described in an Okhrana report written on the eve of the February Revolution. According to the statistics given by the police, the prices of the following items rose from 16 December 1916 to February 1917: potatoes (25%), carrots and turnips (35%), cabbage (25%), meat (20%), sausage (50%), ham (60%), butter (15%), cheese (25%), eggs (20%), milk (40%), bread (15%), apples (70%), peas and oranges (150%), chocolate, cookies, sweet rolls (100%).⁵

The Okhrana agent pointed out that no one without personal connections had access to flour or bread, although in the newspapers optimistic assurances of sufficient reserves of flour were reported almost daily, and the people heard and saw with their own eyes that major bakeries were selling their surpluses to other merchants. Although people were starving, freshly baked white bread was always available in expensive restaurants. Before the war a bakery could sell 10,000 rolls a day, but now most bakeries sold no more than 800 rolls, which were usually gone in one or two hours. Lack of flour forced many bakeries to close. This meant that housewives had to travel further across town to stand in long queues. Many items such as meat, ham, and sausage disappeared from the markets. Milk was priced so high that poor people could not afford it. Many workers' diets consisted of whatever small amount of bread they managed to buy and cabbage soup. Not only food items disappeared but other essential materials as well – boots, galoshes, fabric, soap, and medicine. Firewood was so expensive that many people were forced to decide whether they should heat their apartment and survive on near-starvation rations or whether they should eat but freeze to death. This was particularly hard on the children, who had been deprived of milk, eggs, sweet tea, and butter, and who were now in the precarious position of losing the last vital source of nourishment – bread. The Okhrana agent poignantly remarked:

Resentment is felt worse in large families, where children are starving in the most literal sense of the word, and where no other words are heard except, 'Peace, immediate peace, peace at all costs'. And these mothers, exhausted from standing endlessly at the tail of queues, and having suffered so much in watching their half-starving and sick children, are perhaps much closer to a revolution than Messrs. Miliukov, Rodichev and Co., and of course, they are much more dangerous, since they are the stockpiles of flammable material, needing only a spark to set them afire.⁶

5 GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669 (1917 g.), ll. 25–33.

6 Ibid. l. 27.

Rents also went up considerably, eating up a major portion of the workers' wages. The agent observed that alcoholism had reached epidemic proportions among the workers since September 1916. There was a growing conviction among the more politically conscious workers that a peaceful solution of the food problem would be impossible, and that it would take a revolution for the workers to escape from this misery. The Okhrana agent ominously predicted: 'The underground revolutionary parties are preparing a revolution, but a revolution, if it takes place, will be spontaneous, quite likely a hunger riot.'⁷

Upsurge of Strike Movement

It appears certain that the acute shortage of food contributed to the sudden revival of the strike movement at the beginning of 1917 after a two months' lull. From 1 January through 22 February 1917, there were 268 strikes, involving 320,517 strikers, an average of 5.6 strikes and 6,048.6 participants a day.⁸ Each strike was reported in the daily telephone reports of the Okhrana to the director of the police. There is no need to describe all such reports, which generally give the number of strikers and the nature of demands. Most of the strikes did not last more than one day and ended in failure, since the economic demands were far above what the employers could afford. Faced with a rapidly diminishing supply of raw materials, many factories were forced to curtail production, and employers were in no position to make increases in wages by 50 to 100 percent, which the workers felt perfectly justified in asking.⁹ When the strike – the last resort – failed to help the workers improve their lot, they became receptive to propaganda of political agitators for more radical action.

Leiberov emphasises two characteristics of the January–February strike movement. First, the distinction between economic strikes and political strikes, arbitrarily made by the factory inspectors, became increasingly useless. Second, although political strikes were spearheaded by experienced activists in large factories, economic strikes spread to factories that had never before been involved in the strike movement. The data I collected on the strikes during the period from the police reports indicate two important trends of the

⁷ Ibid. I. 33.

⁸ Of these, 132 political strikes with 147,655 strikers were on 9 January.

⁹ For Okhrana reports on strikes in January and February, see GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669 (1917 g.), ll. 4, 5, 7, 8, 19–23, 45, 56, 60, 153–4, 255–6, 269, 278; GARF, f. POO, 1917 g., d. 669a, ll. 20–3, 40–5, 51–2, 54–5, 62; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., 5, ll. 18, 27; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 61, ch. 2, 1. B, 1917 g. 1–2, ll. 2, 14–24.

1917 strikes. First, although the metalworkers of factories employing between 1,000 and 8,000 workers continued to stand at the forefront of the strike movement, workers from smaller metal factories employing less than 1,000 began to participate. Second, political strikes began to involve workers of the largest munitions plants as well as the textile workers who had generally abstained from the political strikes previously. One of the most protracted strikes took place in the textile mills Voronin, Liutsh, Cheshner in the Vyborg District. The strike, which involved women workers almost exclusively, lasted more than a month. Whether this strike was sustained by particular leaders, or whether an organised political group attempted to inject leadership, is not known, but its duration indicates that discontent had reached the previously unorganised women workers in the textile factories.¹⁰ Also the workers of another textile mill, Leont'ev, were involved in a five-day strike in January. It is important to remember that these women workers already had experience of organising the strike movement in the mills in the Vyborg District. The strike movement that touched off the February Revolution came from these women workers.

Revolutionary Parties Appeal Strikes on 9 January

All the revolutionary parties were aware that the situation was volatile, ripe for revolution. But they differed on how to achieve revolution: through a mass uprising led by revolutionaries or through channelling the masses into the all-social opposition against the government in support of the Duma.¹¹ The revolutionary organisations scrambled to control the workers under their influence. Wishing to exploit their discontent, all the revolutionary parties called for a one-day strike on 9 January, the anniversary of Bloody Sunday, for different goals. The Workers' Group, which had opposed a strike on 9 January the previous year, appealed to the workers to stage a strike and demonstration in support of the Duma in its struggle against the government. The Bolshevik Petersburg Committee also decided to concentrate its propaganda on the 9 January strike and demonstration, intending to lead the demonstration to a confrontation with the police. Their idea was to provoke police shooting against the demonstrators, which would in turn lead to the mutiny of the garrison troops – a scenario that predicted the future course of the February Revolution. But the

10 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 224; GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669 (1917 g.), ll. 19, 20, 45, 56; GARF, f. POO, 1917 g., d. 669 a, ll. 22, 23, 44.

11 Melancon 1990, p. 196.

police moved fast and arrested leading Bolshevik activists on 9, 10, 18, 19, and 28 December, and 2 January. The raid on 28 December practically annihilated the Petersburg Committee, with the arrests of F.A. Lemeshev, and nine other members, and the confiscation of their illegal printing press.¹² Despite this blow the hastily reconstructed Petersburg Committee continued propaganda among those workers promoting the strike, but deprived of the printing press, only the Vyborg District Committee and the Latvian National Committee managed to issue leaflets.

Although the police arrests temporarily slowed down the Bolshevik propaganda, the Menshevik Initiative Group and the Mezhraiontsy, forming a united front with the Bolsheviks, took up the slack by issuing the leaflets. The Initiative Group appealed to the workers to strike against the war and the monarchy and for the establishment of a republican system and the convocation of a constituent assembly. In their leaflet the Mezhraiontsy attacked the Workers' Group, and urged the workers to stage a strike, not in support of 'Prince L'vov, Miliukov, and Co.', as the Workers' Group encouraged, but against the war, tsarism, and the bourgeoisie. But unlike the Bolsheviks the Mezhraiontsy called for the unification of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Only under the leadership of a united Social Democratic party could the proletariat be victorious against tsarism and the bourgeoisie.¹³ Over the objections of a cautious Aleksandrovich, the SR activists led by N. Sviatitskii organised their factory cells so that 'massive numbers of workers carrying banners with revolutionary political slogans would suddenly and irresistibly converge on the Nevskii'.¹⁴

On 9 January 1917, over 140,000 workers from at least 120 factories, or more than 40 percent of the total number of workers in Petrograd, participated in the strike. In the Vyborg and Nevskii districts it took on the character of a general strike. It was more than twice as large as the previous year's anniversary strike (67,000 workers of 55 factories), and even exceeded the 1914 strike, the largest one on 9 January until then (110,000 workers).¹⁵ The Workers' Group alone

12 GARF, f. DPOO, 1917 g., d. 5 ch. 57/1917 g., ll. 1–3, 18; Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, pp. 520–3; 'Iz proshlogo Leningradskoi organisatsii' 1931, pp. 37–8; McKean 1990, p. 399.

13 GARF, f. DPOO, 1917 g., d. 5 ch. 57/1917 g., l. 18; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 264–8, 271–2. Aleksandrovich and the SR Internationalists supported the strike, but opposed demonstration and armed uprising as advocated by the Bolsheviks. McKean 1990, p. 399.

14 Melancon 1990, pp. 196–7.

15 For the strike figures on 9 January 1917, see GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669 (1917 g.), ll. 41–2; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 158/1917 g., ll. 1–2; Rabochee dvizhenie 1958, pp. 523–6. According to all these sources, 144,498 workers from 114 factories struck on this day. Leiberov adds the figures that are not included in the Okhrana reports and comes up with the following totals: 147,655

succeeded in organising factory meetings at the Arsenal, Petrograd Engineering and Obukhov and others, where speakers spoke in favour of the Workers' Group's programmes. All the middle-sized metal factories in the Vyborg District, which had been the Bolsheviks' stronghold, struck, but for the first time in the war almost all the gigantic munitions plants participated in the strike, including Franco-Russian, Neva Shipyard, Petrograd Metal, and Obukhov.¹⁶ Although a great number of workers participated in the one-day strike, massive demonstrations did not take place. Some workers attempted to demonstrate in the Vyborg District, but they were easily scattered by the police. Petrograd security authorities were relieved by the lack of violence and proudly attributed this to the successful repression of the Bolshevik underground organisations.¹⁷

The Workers' Group Appeal Strike and Demonstration on 14 February

After the 9 January strike the revolutionary parties became embroiled in serious competition for control of the workers' movement in Petrograd. As their next move the Workers' Group planned a strike and a massive demonstration in front of the Tauride Palace on 14 February in support of the Duma. In mid-January the Workers' Group sent instructions to various workers' organisations in Petrograd, urging them to intensify propaganda work for the 14 February demonstration. This circular stated that the success of the general strike on 9 January was an indication that Petrograd workers considered a major confrontation between the bourgeoisie and tsarism to be inevitable. 'This confrontation will be beneficial to democracy', the letter continued, 'and in such a struggle, the proletariat will tip the balance of the scale by its organised activities'. Gvozdev, Abrasimov, Breido, Emel'ianov, and other leaders busily went from factory to factory and spoke at mass rallies to drum up support for their plan.¹⁸ On 26 January the Workers' Group adopted a resolution intended to be distributed among the workers. Responding to the accusation of the anti-war groups that the Workers' Group stood for the war, it replied that peace achieved by the present government would bring to the people even more unhappiness, misery and slavery. The main task of the proletariat would not be to end the

(or 42.8 percent of all workers) from 132 factories (or 14.6 percent of the total number of factories). Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, p. 288.

16 McKean 1990, pp. 399–400. Also see Hasegawa 1981, Appendix 2.

17 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 25; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 158/1917 g., ll. 1–2, 3–4.

18 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 347, 46/1917 g., l. 9; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 347, l. 15.

war but rather to overthrow the autocracy. The proletariat should, therefore, actively participate in the impending confrontation between the bourgeoisie and the autocracy on the opening day of the Duma. For that purpose the Workers' Group urged the workers to create factory strike committees.¹⁹

The leftward turn of the Workers' Group alarmed the government. On 3 January Khabalov wrote a letter to Guchkov, in which he complained about the Workers' Group's 'subversive activities'. According to Khabalov, the Workers' Group was trying to establish a Social Democratic republic by overthrowing a legitimate government. Protopopov considered the possibility of linking the workers' movement with the liberal oppositions most dangerous, and began a press campaign against the Workers' Group.²⁰ But he feared that the arrest of its members might provoke a massive strike movement. He consulted the tsar on this matter, and Nicholas flippantly ordered: 'What can we do? Arrest them'.²¹ On 27 January Protopopov's police raided the Workers' Group while its members were having a meeting in their office on the Liteinyi. Altogether eleven members, including its chairman, Gvozdev, secretary, Bogdanov, and the five workers who were present at the meeting, were arrested. Only three members of the group, a police spy, Abrasimov, and two others, Ia. S. Ostapenko and E.A. Anasovskii, escaped arrest. From then on Ostapenko and Anasovskii continued their propaganda as underground revolutionary activists on behalf of the Workers' Group, until they, too, were arrested on 25 February, on the third day of the February Revolution.²²

The arrest deprived the Workers' Group of its leaders, forced the activists to go underground, and destroyed the possibility of united action between the liberals and the working class. Despite this blow, the remaining members of the Workers' Group and the activists who supported it continued propaganda for the 14 February demonstration. An oratorical group was formed and engaged in intensified propaganda activities, particularly in Erikson, Obukhov, Arsenal, and other large state factories.²³ In view of the persistent rumour that Abrasimov was a police provocateur, the remaining members broke off relations with him.

19 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 279–80.

20 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 347/1917, ll. 20, 21.

21 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, ll. 154–7.

22 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 347/1917 g., ll. 3–5.

23 GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, 1917 g., l. 25; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 318.

The Left-Wing Socialists Oppose the 14 February Strike and Demonstration

The attempts of the Workers' Group to organise a political offensive on 14 February met with hostility from the anti-war groups. The Initiative Group, responding to the distributed leaflets, declared that the Duma, 'anti-people in its composition and reactionary in its political demands, is not capable of carrying out a struggle for the interests of people'. It warned: the Duma 'will in the decisive moment go with the government against the people rather than with the people against the government'. The Duma stood for the continuation of the war against the wishes of the people, while in internal policies it 'wants to keep all the privileges of the propertied classes untouched'. Thus the Initiative Group objected to the idea of the Workers' Group to 'subordinate the interests of the working class to the interests of the bourgeoisie', and to use the workers' movement as an 'instrument' of the bourgeois opposition.²⁴

Going one step further than the Initiative Group, the Bolsheviks proposed an alternative move to disrupt the action organised by the Workers' Group. On 2 February the Petersburg Committee decided to organise a one-day strike on 10 February to commemorate the anniversary of the trial of the Bolshevik Duma deputies. This decision, however, ignored a 'small detail', as Shliapnikov pointed out. The three-day religious holiday, *Maslenitsa*, was to start on 9 February, and on 10 February most of the factories would be either closed or on curtailed working hours.²⁵ Taking this into consideration, the Russian Bureau proposed a one-day strike on 13 February, and if the movement received the overwhelming support of the workers, the Bolsheviks were to take the initiative in the strike movement on 14 February from the hands of the Workers' Group. The Russian Bureau's proposal, however, was too moderate for the members of the Petersburg Committee, since the former still subordinated its policy to the initiative of the Workers' Group. Despite the attempts of the Russian Bureau to talk them out of it, the Petersburg Committee went ahead with their original plan. The Mezhraiontsy supported the Petersburg Committee's proposal to stage a one-day strike on 10 February, but they were more cautious about 'premature action' at a time when the working class was not yet organised under

24 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 287–90. According to Melancon, the Initiative Group later cancelled this leaflet, and advocated the 14 February demonstration 'under certain conditions'. Melancon 1990, pp. 203–4.

25 RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1060, ll. 20–2; GARF, f. POO, 1917 g., d. 669a, ll. 38–9; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 41–2.

a united Social Democratic party and when the workers had not established solidarity with the soldiers.²⁶

The police were alarmed by the discussions of the workers' offensive as reported by the Okhrana agents, who were convinced that there would be a large-scale 'disturbance' from 10 February to 14 February. In preparation the security agencies of Petrograd mapped out an elaborate plan to suppress disorders. On 9 February a proclamation was issued in the name of Khabalov that any demonstration would be countered with severe measures by the police. On the following day Miliukov's statement, which attempted to dissuade the workers from strike and demonstration, was printed in Petrograd newspapers side by side with Khabalov's proclamation.²⁷ Miliukov insinuated that the appeal for the demonstration was the insidious work of German spies. Miliukov's appeal had no tangible effect on the workers' actions, however. The movement in Petrograd reached the point where neither Miliukov's prestige nor the ugly spectre of German spies could stem its tide. Even worse, Miliukov's appeal printed side by side with Khabalov's proclamation gave the workers the impression that the Duma liberals and the government were on the same side of the barricade as far as the workers' movement was concerned.

On 10 February most factories were closed at ten o'clock in the morning for the *Maslenitsa* holiday. In some factories it was payday. With the exception of a few political rallies held at the initiative of the Bolshevik activists, the Petersburg Committee's attempt to organise a strike was a complete fiasco. Only 424 workers of three factories struck on this day.²⁸ The failure of the 10 February strike divided the anti-war groups over what to do about the proposed 14 February strike. The Russian Bureau tried to regroup the demoralised Bolshevik activists for the 13 February strike, but could not get much cooperation from them. The Mezhrayontsy distributed a leaflet appealing to the workers not to participate in the demonstration on 14 February, but decided to take part if spontaneous demonstrations sprang up. But the Initiative Group decided to join the demonstration and to take the initiative from the hands of the Workers' Group. On 13 February, no workers responded to the Russian Bureau's strike call.²⁹

26 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 43–4.

27 GARF, f. POO, 1917 g., d. 669a, ll. 38–39; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., ll. 6–7; RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1060, ll. 20–2; see Chapter 8. Also see *Rech'*, 'Pis'mo v redaktsiiu', 10 February 1917, p. 3.

28 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 311; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1: 327.

29 Iurenev 1924, pp. 131–3; R. Kovnator 1934, p. 186; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 56, 312.

On 14 February more than 84,000 workers from 52 factories participated in the strike.³⁰ Aivaz, Petrograd Metal Factory, Putilov and Obukhov, where the Workers' Group had concentrated its propaganda activities, were the major forces. A majority of strikers, however, quietly went home, although it was noted that in two areas – the Vyborg District and the Petergof Chaussee – some attempts were made to stage a demonstration. But those who gathered were easily chased away by the police. Security authorities took extraordinary precautions to protect government buildings, factories, and railway stations, and in accordance with the plan, in addition to the police, troops were assigned to designated positions.³¹ Security was extremely tight near the Tauride Palace, where the Workers' Group had appealed to the workers to stage a massive demonstration. But on this day no one could get near the Tauride Palace. Shliapnikov, dressed as a respectable 'bourgeois', took an inspection tour near the Tauride Palace and the Smol'nyi Institute, but he saw no 'mass demonstration'. Some residents gathered nervously near the palace, and servants and doormen stood sheepishly on street corners, expecting to see 'disorders'. Even the police were hidden from sight. Shliapnikov sarcastically remarked: 'Thus I was not fortunate enough to see the "mass support" for the State Duma'. It was reported that only two to three hundred demonstrators appeared near the Tauride Palace, but they were immediately driven away by the police.³²

The small turnout of strikers compared with the 9 January strike and lack of any massive demonstration in front of the Tauride Palace have led Soviet-era historians to conclude that the 14 February offensive proposed by the Workers' Group was a dismal failure.³³ But considering the enormous handicap inflicted by the arrests of almost all its leaders, the persistent opposition of the Bolsheviks, Mezhrailontsy, left SRS, and the Initiative Group, and the scare tactics used by Miliukov and Khabalov, the Workers' Group proved its viability as a leading group in the workers' movement by bringing out more than half of the number of strikers for the 9 January strike. No doubt it would be a mistake to argue that all the strike participants on 14 February were supporters of the Workers' Group. It appears that the fine doctrinal differences that separated the two groups of the workers' movement did not play an important part in the workers' decision. A majority of workers still remained well beyond the

30 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917, l. 8. According to another Okhrana report, there were 89,576 workers from 58 factories. GARF, f. POO, 1917 g., d. 669a, l. 46.

31 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 1, pp. 330–1.

32 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 56–57; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., l. 8; GARF, f. POO, 1917 g., d. 669a, l. 46.

33 Leiberov 1972a, p. 51; Burdzhakov 1967, pp. 107–8.

firm grasp of either group, but what the strike on 14 February proved was the willingness of many workers to act in response to the call to overthrow the regime.

Kerenskii Organises the Informal Information Bureau of Socialists

Another important development was the informal joint socialist meetings organised by Kerenskii. Early February all socialists, including Right SRs (Kerenskii and Zenzinov), Duma Mensheviks (Chkheidze and Skobelev), non-aligned former Bolshevik lawyer Sokolov, left SR Aleksandrovich, and Bolshevik Shliapnikov met at the apartment of Right Menshevik A.Ia. Galperin, who was a known Masonic member. They discussed their respective policy toward the 14 February demonstrations. Heated words were exchanged between Kerensky and Chkheidze, on the one hand, and Aleksandrovich and Shliapnikov, on the other. In the end, the two left-wing representatives walked out of the meeting. Despite disagreements, however, this informal information bureau met from time to time to exchange information before the February Revolution.³⁴

The Strike Movement Picked Up Tempo

After 14 February the strike movement quickly picked up tempo. In the latter half of February two huge plants, the Izhora Factory and the Putilov Factory, struck. The Izhora, located in Kolpino, was one of the largest state weapons factories, where an underground Bolshevik cell had been actively organising the factory workers. Various workshops in this factory had presented their economic demands between 30 January and 3 February: an increase in hourly wages, an increase of overtime wages by 350 to 450 percent, the provision of heated latrines in the workshops, free medical aid for the workers and their families, and an eight-hour workday.³⁵ On 8 February the factory management conveyed its partial acceptance of the demands through the *starosta*, but the workers found this answer inadequate. On 9 February all the workshops except two were shut down. The workers, about three thousand in number, who set up a picket line near the factory gate, refused to admit other workers. Two workers who ventured to break through the picket line had dirty machine oil thrown in their faces.³⁶

34 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 59–60; Melancon 1990, pp. 202, 208; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 169–70, 206; Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 223–4.

35 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 61, ch. 2 1B, 1917 g., l. 14.

36 Ibid., l. 15; GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, 1917 g., l. 255.

On 13 February, Izhora employees resubmitted their demands, but the management refused to negotiate. The excited workers held a meeting at which a Bolshevik worker, Panov, spoke against the proposed strike call by the 'Gvozdevites' on 14 February. The management ordered the workers to return to work by 15 February. Despite the Bolshevik workers' appeal not to strike, the workers continued the strike on 14 February. The political rally held in the factory was broken up by the Cossacks, but according to the Okhrana report, 'in general there was an impression that the Cossacks were on the side of the workers'.³⁷ In defiance of the administration's order, the workers did not report to work on 15 February, and held a massive political rally in the factory courtyard. No sooner had the Bolshevik worker Panov begun his speech than the Kolpino police chief, accompanied by the Cossacks, attempted to arrest him. By the time they reached the speaker's platform, Panov was securely hidden among the crowd of workers. Another Bolshevik, Mareev, stood up on a piece of heavy machinery and began his speech. A Cossack officer attempted to stop him: 'Russia is in danger, and you are appealing for strike. What are you doing? You must not do this'. At this point, a representative from the Petersburg Committee climbed up on the railing and shouted at the officer: 'Shame on you, Mr. Officer. You are the one who is ruining Russia. People are demanding bread'. The Cossacks broke up the meeting, but the workers moved the meeting place from one workshop to another through narrow passageways, where the Cossacks' horses could not get through. On 16 February the factory administration declared a lockout.³⁸

On the following day 478 workers of the gun-carriage punching workshop of Putilov Factory abandoned their work and demanded an increase in wages. Despite the administrator's threat that the workshop would be closed down, the workers continued the strike for three days. On 20 February the strike spread to 830 workers in the machine workshop and 850 workers in the boiler workshop, and on the following day to 1,000 workers in the assembly workshop. A huge rally was held in the factory courtyard in which speakers appealed to other workers to join the strike. Fearing that a factory general strike might be declared, the factory administration resorted to a lockout. On 22 February the factory gates were tightly closed, and the workers read the proclamation issued by the director of the factory, Major-General Dublitskii, declaring that 'in view of the systematic disruption of order' the factory would be closed for an indefinite period.³⁹ Thus, 26,700 workers at the Putilov Factory were out of

37 GARF, f. POO, d. 669 (1917 g.), l. 255.

38 Ibid.

39 GARF, f. POO, 1917 g., 669a, ll. 51, 55; GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, ll. 269–70, 278.

work. According to Putilov worker A. Grigevich, the angered workers held a rally outside the factory gate. Some proposed that they break the gates and go into the factory, but others advocated that they go around the city in an attempt to draw other factories into the strike. Reportedly the workers elected a strike committee on the spot, marched along the Peterhof Chaussee toward the Narva Gates, and disrupted the work of Tentelev Chemical Factory on the way.⁴⁰ The lockout, however, deprived the Putilov workers of a gathering place, something they needed to sustain the momentum of the strike movement. In spite of the often repeated misconception that the Putilov strike touched off the February Revolution, the Putilov workers remained inactive until February 25, the third day of the February Revolution.⁴¹

The strike movement expanded further – on 20 February, 1,486 workers of the Putilov Shipyard, 2,000 workers of the Petrograd Wagon Factory, and 1,200 workers of the Russian Cotton Manufacture struck for an increase in wages. On 21 February, these factories were joined by 741 workers from the boiler workshop of the Obukhov Factory. Drivers and conductors of the city trams presented their demand to the city administration for a wage increase. On 22 February, the strike spread to 700 workers in Perun in the Narva District, 600 workers in the Russian-Baltic Aeronautic Factory, 200 workers in the Franco-Russian Factory, 1,000 workers in Lebedev Jute, 80 workers in Baranovskii, and 300 workers in the Petrograd Pipe Factory. At Parviainen, 2,000 workers held a short meeting [*letnyi skhodka*] to discuss the food crisis. The textile workers of Voronin, Liutsh, and Chesher struck again, demanding a 50 percent wage increase and the establishment of a bread shop in the factory.⁴² These strikes were still isolated from one another, but they were, like the rumbling of thunder, sure signs of an approaching storm.

40 Burdzhakov 1967, p. 116; Document 2, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 18–19.

41 Some historians erroneously credit the initiative of the strike movement on 23 February to the workers of Putilov Factory. Ferro 1967, p. 64; Anweiler 1958, p. 128; Pearson 1977, p. 140. Khabalov, however, states that there was no trouble in the Putilov Factory. Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie* 1924, vol. 1, p. 213. Recently, V.V. Polikarpov revived the view that the Putilov strike, not the Vyborg workers' strike, represented the beginning of the February Revolution. His article contains valuable information indicating the Putilov workers maintained contact with Kerenskii and Chkheidze. This article has come to my attention after I finished my manuscript. My ultimate judgement for this article has to wait for careful examination of his sources. Polikarpov 2914, pp. 43–71.

42 GARF, f. POO, 1917 g., d. 669a, l. 54; GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, ll. 154, 269–70, 278, 292–3. According to an Okhrana report, 7,500 workers of New Lessner and 1,500 workers of Russian Renault struck on 22 February 22. Ibid. 11. This must be a mistake. No other records mention strikes in these factories.

PART 3

The Uprising



The Beginning: February 23

International Women's Day and the Revolutionary Parties

Clara Zetkin, a famed German Social Democrat, proposed naming 8 March (23 February on the Julian calendar) International Women's Day at the Second International Conference of Women Socialists held in Copenhagen in 1910. But its significance soon became lost among the western socialists in the holocaust of the World War. Russian socialists celebrated this day first in 1913 in a miserably small demonstration in St. Petersburg, but unlike their colleagues in western Europe a small group of radical anti-war socialists managed to keep the memory of this day alive even in the midst of the war by distributing leaflets against the war. Yet 23 February was not as well embedded in the tradition of the workers' movement in Russia as May Day or 9 January. Thus when International Women's Day approached in 1917, it is not surprising that none of the Russian socialist parties greeted it with great enthusiasm and determination.¹

From the end of December the Mezhraiontsy had tried to stage a united action with the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee and the Menshevik Initiative Group for the celebration of International Women's Day, but the three groups could not agree on slogans and decided to act independently. The Initiative Group devoted one issue of their journal, *Trud*, to the celebration of the day.² The Mezhraiontsy were the most active, managing to distribute leaflets among the workers. The leaflet explained in simple language that the workers, particularly the women, were victimised by the war, which continued only to generate profits for capitalists. Stressing that their misery and hunger would not be eliminated unless the capitalist system was overthrown, the leaflet appealed to the workers: 'It's about time to tell them loud: Enough! Down with the criminal government and all its gang of thieves and murderers. Long live peace!'

The Mezhraiontsy held a series of 'educational' meetings from 20 February to 23 February in Aivaz Factory and the workers' cooperative, Ob"edinenie.³ Several days before 23 February, the Mezhraionka, anticipating a general strike,

1 For the most recent description on the beginning of the revolution on 23 February, see Ganelin 2014a, pp. 72–85.

2 Iurenev 1924, 133–4; Ermanskii 1927, pp. 138–9; Melancon 2000, pp. 16–17.

3 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 308; R. Kovnator 1924, p. 184; Document 3, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 19–21.

recommended the election of factory, district, and all-city committees. Melancon argues that the Mezhraiontsy advocated and engaged in propaganda among workers to strike and demonstrate on 23 February. Since the SR leader, Aleksandrovich, worked closely with the Mezhraionka, the SR activists must have been also in favour of the strike and demonstration on that day.⁴

The Bolsheviks failed to issue any leaflets on this day, since, according to Shliapnikov, the printing press of the Petersburg Committee had been destroyed by the police raid.⁵ The Bolshevik inaction, however, was the result of the policy of the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee, led by Shliapnikov himself, rather than due to technical difficulties. The bureau, considering the build-up of the organisational strength of the party its most urgent task, directed lower party organs not to divert unnecessary energy for this relatively insignificant occasion and to restrict their activities to propaganda among the workers. This policy met with resentment from party workers in the Vyborg District, who advocated bolder action, calling for a strike.⁶ On 22 February, a Bolshevik worker of the Erikson Factory and a member of the Vyborg District Committee of the Bolshevik party, V.N. Kaiurov, organised a meeting of women workers, at which he explained the meaning of Women's Day, the history of the women's liberation movement, and above all, the significance of the struggle against the war. Kaiurov, however, strongly urged the audience to refrain from action and to follow only the directions of the Bolshevik party.⁷

Even the hardened Bolshevik activists like Kaiurov underestimated the despair and rage of the female workers.⁸ His view also betrayed the Bolshevik male activists' condescending view of the potentialities of their female workers. A police officer in the second precinct of Vyborg District was much better than Kaiurov at sensing the pulse of workers. He reported to the *gradonachal'nik* on 22 February:

4 Melancon 1990, pp. 230–4.

5 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 74.

6 N. Sveshnikov, a Bolshevik worker in Old Lessner, and a member of the Vyborg District Committee, mentions that the Vyborg District Committee adopted a resolution on 20 February to take measures to have women abandon their work on 23 February. This seems to be unlikely, since a strike restricted to women workers was impossible. Sveshnikov's account, however, indicates that some Bolshevik workers were dissatisfied with Shliapnikov's directives. Sveshnikov 1967, p. 82; Sveshnikov, 'Otryvki iz vospominanii', *Petrogradskaia pravda*, 14 March 1923.

7 Kaiurov 1923, p. 158.

8 McKean 1990, p. 468.

The masses of workers are extremely agitated by the shortage of food. Almost all the police officers hear every day complaints that they have not eaten bread for two, three days or more. Therefore it is easy to expect major street disturbances. The acuteness of the situation reached such a point that some who were fortunate enough to be able to buy two loaves of bread cross themselves and cry from joy.⁹

Women's Strikes Spread to Other Factories in the Vyborg District

On the morning of 23 February illegal meetings were held in several textile factories in Vyborg District. Five of the largest – Nikol'skaia Cotton (1,497 workers), Vyborg Cotton (755), Nevka (2,748), Sampsonievskiaia Cotton (1,592), and Lebedev Jute Factory (998) – were concentrated along the bank of the Nevka and Sampsonievskii Prospekt. While the workers of other textile mills had not been drawn into the strike movement, the women in these factories had actively participated in the strike movement during the war.¹⁰ They now abandoned work at the end of their meetings, and marched to the neighbouring factories, shouting simply 'Bread'!

The Nevka Cotton Factory was located between two large metal factories, New Lessner and Erikson. The women moved to these factories, appealing to the metalworkers to join their strike, shouting: 'Bread!' and pelting the windows of factories with rocks. When the police arrested one woman, she shouted at the arresting policeman: 'You don't have long to enjoy yourselves, you'll soon be hanging by your heads.'¹¹ The strike and demonstration initiated by the textile workers prompted all the revolutionary party activists to take action.

This put the Bolshevik activists on the spot. On the one hand, they knew that the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee was reluctant to support direct action at this moment. On the other hand, they could not, in good conscience, ignore and isolate the fellow workers who had started the strike movement, especially when the other rival revolutionary party activists were quick to seize the moment to spread the strike. When the news of the women's strike reached Erikson Factory, Kaiurov and four other Bolsheviks met in a corridor. Kaiurov was angry with the breach of discipline of the workers he thought he had controlled. 'I was extremely indignant with the actions of the strikers', writes

9 RGIA, f. 1278, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 114.

10 Wada 1968, p. 393; Melancon 1990, p. 233. See Hasegawa 1981, Appendix.

11 Fevral'skaia Revoliutsiia 1918, p. 162; Melancon 1990, p. 238.

Kaiurov, 'Not only did they blatantly ignore the decisions of the party district committee, but also just the night before I had appealed to the women workers to maintain restraint and discipline'.¹² The Erikson Bolsheviks, unable to decide whether they should support the strike, wanted to wait and see what the other party activists in the factory would do.

They met with the SRs and the Mensheviks in a joint meeting attended by about a dozen political leaders in the factory. A number of urgent questions were raised. Would the Erikson workers respond favourably to a strike call? If they went on strike, would there be any guarantee that other factory workers would join them also? Should they restrict themselves only to a strike or should they stage a demonstration in the streets? According to one of the participants in the meeting, an SR worker, I. Mil'chik: 'Despite the absence of conviction as to whether other factories would join us, it was decided quickly and unanimously, which was usually not the case, to go on strike and go out into the streets with the slogans: "Down with the autocracy", "Down with the war", and "Give us bread"'. Kaiurov recalls: 'My proposal was adopted that once we decide to act with protest, we must immediately lead all the workers without exception into the streets and we ourselves must stand at the head of the strike and demonstration'.¹³ The activists in Erikson thus gambled on direct action in support of the strike and demonstration. The strike started by the women textile workers demanding bread now began to be transformed into a highly political demonstration led by experienced, conscious elements of the working class.

At Erickson, no one worked in the workshops, although machines were still running. The workers formed various groups, anxiously awaiting the decision of their leaders. As usual, the young workers were first to learn of the strike decision. Whistling and shouting, they ran from one workshop to another: 'Stop the work. To the meeting!' The machines came to stop with a clanging noise. Workers grabbed their overcoats and hurried to the courtyard. Foremen suddenly disappeared behind the glass windows of their offices, and watched the workers 'like frightened birds'. Administrators also appeared in the courtyard, accompanied by the engineers, but they simply watched the workers' meeting with a curious look. The strike leaders spoke, instructing rather than agitating, and emphasised that the purpose of the demonstration was the overthrow of tsarism, and that under no circumstances should the workers resort to vandalism. The call to strike was accepted with enthusiasm, and the workers poured

¹² Kaiurov 1923, p. 158.

¹³ Milchik 1931, pp. 60–1; Kaiurov 1923, p. 158.

out of the factory gate to Sampsonievskii Prospekt. Kaiurov belatedly became convinced that 'the idea of action has been long ripe among the workers'.¹⁴

A similar process was repeated in New Lessner as well. A Bolshevik worker in the New Lessner Factory, I. Gordienko, recalls that on the morning of 23 February, workers of the factory suddenly heard women's voices screaming for bread and against the war. Halting their work, they rushed to the windows. The women, filling the narrow streets below the windows, waved at them, shouting: 'Come on out! Quit working! Join us!' Agitated, the workers ignored their foremen's threats, and held a political meeting in each workshop. *Strike* was the unanimous decision and the workers hurried out of the factory and into the streets to join the crowds moving along the Bol'shoi Sampsonievskii Prospekt. According to Chugurin, the appeal of the textile workers to strike caused a dilemma among the Bolshevik activists in New Lessner. But under strong pressure from young workers for strike, they, too, had to decide to join it. Here again the Bolsheviks' decision may have been motivated by their concerns that they might fall behind the other revolutionary activists. The demonstrators, joined by 4,500 workers from Erikson and 7,500 workers from New Lessner, moved to Russian Renault, where the workers also joined them. The demonstrators marched southward along Sampsonievskii Prospekt, drawing workers from the factories along the way. According to Leiberov's calculation, by 10 a.m. ten factories and approximately 27,000 workers in Vyborg District struck. By twelve o'clock noon twenty-one factories and 50,000 workers had joined in. Not all of the strikers were dedicated political activists, however. When the demonstrators reached the end of Sampsonievskii Prospekt, they numbered only 4,000; the rest of the strikers had gone home.¹⁵

About two thousand demonstrators moved toward another industrial complex along the bank of the Great Neva. The first target was the Arsenal, a large state munitions factory. The Arsenal workers were usually conservative, for they received a higher salary than workers in other factories and a special pension for sickness and old age. Throughout the morning workers in the factory discussed in whispers the disturbances outside. During the lunch break the demonstrators approached the factory, appealing directly to the Arsenal workers to quit work. In one of the workshops, about forty workers led by an SR member, I. Markov, left the workshop. Joining other workers coming from other workshops, they went into the streets through the factory gates, defiantly

14 Mil'chik 1931, pp. 61–2; Kaiurov 1923, p. 158.

15 Gordienko 1957, pp. 56–7; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2: 60–8; Leiberov 1967, pp. 8, 12; RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 111.

singing *La Marseillaise*. The administration of the Arsenal could do nothing about this sudden mass walkout, though they did rush to the factory gates to shout: 'Come to your senses. What are you doing?! You are aiding our enemy, the Germans! Traitors to the fatherland!' The strikers retorted: 'What about Sukhomlinov? Miasoedov? The Empress herself is a Germany spy'.¹⁶ According to the memoirs of an SR worker Voronkov, the call to stop work came at 2 p.m. 'We came out. We met on the street to organise the group. I made a speech to explain what should happen. We went to Nevskii'.¹⁷

Another SR member, I. Mil'chik of Erikson Factory, who was among the demonstrators outside, told a different story. The demonstrators, who did not expect the conservative Arsenal workers to join the strike voluntarily, surrounded the factory and bombarded it with rocks and pieces of iron. This tactic – forcible removal of workers – was to become common during the strike movement in the February Revolution. The Arsenal workers were forced to abandon work, but rather than joining the demonstration, most of them went straight home. After the Arsenal, the demonstrators went to nearby Phoenix, 'removing' the workers from this factory also. Another group of demonstrators reached Petrograd Cartridge Factory on Tikhvenskaia Street around four o'clock in the afternoon, another government-owned munitions factory with more than 8,000 workers. The demonstrators broke the factory gate, rushed inside the factory compound and, running from one workshop to another, disrupted work. The police arrested nineteen demonstrators, but 5,000 workers were 'removed'. The demonstrators set up a picket line in front of the Arsenal, Cartridge Factory, Phoenix, and Petrograd Metal Factory to make sure that the night shift would not resume work.¹⁸ The director of the Cartridge Factory sought assistance from the police precinct in the morning, but the police told him to contact the *gradonachal'nik* instead. The *gradonacha'nik* in turn passed the buck by telling him to contact the military authority. Only in the evening after the workers left, did the unit of the Moscow Regiment appear. The director asserted: 'Had it arrived in time, the workers would not have joined the strike'.¹⁹

Aivaz Machine Factory (4,000 workers) was located in Lesnoi, far north of the major industrial complex in Vyborg District. Around two o'clock in the afternoon, on the initiative of the women workers in the factory, the workers met in the automation section. The women workers complained about the inequality

16 Markov 1927, pp. 69–70.

17 Based on archival source at RTsKhIDNI, f. 70, op. 3, d. 563, l. 4, quoted by Melancon 2000, p. 16.

18 Mil'chik 1931, p. 65; RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 111, 112.

19 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 112.

of women and appealed to the men to support their demand for bread. The factory administrator promised to bake bread in the factory at the expense of the management and some speakers spoke against the strike, arguing that in view of the management's good will it would be counterproductive. But this voice of moderation was drowned out by the women's shouts: 'Let's go home'. By four o'clock, the workers quietly left the factory and went home.²⁰ Although there were scattered incidents of strikes in other parts of the city, the strike movement was mainly a local phenomenon in the Vyborg District, although more than ten strikes occurred in the Petrograd District. By the end of the day the strike engulfed thirty-two large plants and more than 59,800 workers, or 61 percent of all the workers in Vyborg District.²¹

Strikes in the Petrograd District and Other Parts of the City

In the Petrograd District, the first factories to strike were Diuflon and Langenzippen. About three hundred workers of Langenzippen marched along Kamenostrovskii Prospekt to Kronverk Prospekt, disrupting work at a few factories along the way. They moved to the Kronverk division of the Pipe Factory and to the Kahn factory, but were repulsed by police. On the northern side of Petrograd District about fifteen hundred workers of Vulkan assembled at the gate of the Machine Factory of the First Russian Society of Aeronautics, another munitions factory, and appealed to the workers to abandon their work. The police rushed to the scene and a police inspector, Bashev, ordered the crowd to disperse. No sooner had Bashev pulled his revolver to enforce his order than the angry mob surrounding him beat him with sticks and clubs. The demonstrators broke into the factory, and 'removed' the workers. On this day, in the Petrograd District, altogether eleven factories and 8,341 workers took part in the strike.²²

The labour unrest of 23 February was limited mainly to these two districts. In Narva-Petergof District the lockout at the Putilov Factory continued, and Putilov workers did not take part in the strike.²³ In the Kolomenskaia District,

20 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 112.

21 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 75; Leiberov 1967, p. 17. Also see Hasegawa 1981, Appendix 2, col. 14; Document 1, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 17. The Okhrana agent's report in the last item gives the number, 'more than 15,000 workers'.

22 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 121; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 76; Leiberov 1967, p. 17; GARF, f. P00, op. 5, d. 669, l. 310; Document 5, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 23–4.

23 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 81.

Franco-Russian Factory workers held a political rally, but the majority supported opinions against strike. The total number of strikers on 23 February was somewhere between 78,000 and 128,000 or about 20 to 30 percent of the workers in Petrograd. The number of struck factories was about 50.²⁴ The number of strikers and the struck factories of the 23 February strike was much smaller in scope than the 9 January strike, and a little smaller or comparable to the 14 February strike.

Strikers Attempt to Stage Demonstrations on Nevskii

What distinguished the 23 February strike from the previous large strikes during the war was not its size, but its militancy. In many factories the strike was not a voluntary decision by the workers, but rather a forcible removal by the striking workers. Another important aspect was that the 23 February strike was accompanied by the workers' persistent attempt to stage a demonstration on Nevskii Prospekt. As soon as the news of the strike reached the *gradonachal'nik*, he assigned large police forces to Liteinyi Bridge, which connects the Vyborg District to the centre of the city, and to Liteinyi Prospekt, the main through-way leading from Liteinyi Bridge to Nevskii Prospekt. The strategy of the police was first to prevent demonstrators from crossing the river, and secondly to drive them away from Liteinyi Prospekt, if some managed to break through the police lines at the bridge.²⁵

The workers in the Vyborg District moved to Liteinyi Bridge from two directions: Bol'shoi Sampsonievskii Prospekt on the west side of Vyborg District, and Bezborodkin Prospekt-Simbirskii Prospekt, on the east. The first important confrontation between police and demonstrators took place on Liteinyi Bridge. The superiority of the organised police forces in such a restricted area was unmistakable. Although the demonstrators tried many times to charge the lines at the bridge, the police successfully held them back. Only a handful of

24 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 118. According to the Okhrana report, the number of strikes and of the struck factories was respectively 78,444 and 43; according to the police report, respectively 87,534 and 50; according to Leiberov, 128,388 and 49. *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, p. 162; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 78, 316; Document 5, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 23–5; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 86; Leiberov 1967, p. 24; Burdzhakov 1967, pp. 128–9. Evidently the figures given by Leiberov include the strikers of Putilov Factory, who did not actively participate in the strike and the demonstration on 23 February.

25 Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie* 1924, vol. 1, p. 183.

demonstrators managed to break through.²⁶ There was one factor, however, that the police overlooked. The winter was severe, and the Neva was still frozen. At about four o'clock in the afternoon demonstrators began crossing the river on the ice. Since the use of firearms was forbidden at this stage, the police were powerless. Some strikers went to the Petrograd District, reaching the centre of the city from there by way of Troitskii Bridge, where the police cordon was less tight. Nevertheless, no sooner had they reassembled on the left bank of the river than the police attacked them. Obviously the police had the upper hand this day.²⁷

Once on the other side of the Neva, the workers divided into two groups. One moving toward the Fontanka Canal tried to reach Kazan Square on the west end of Nevskii.²⁸ This was the first group to arrive at Nevskii. The Kazan police precinct reported on the arrival of 1,000 at 4:40 p.m. approaching Kazan Bridge on Nevskii Prospekt singing and shouting, 'Give us bread!'²⁹ But the police and gendarmes immediately dispersed the crowds.

Another group moved along Liteinyi Prospekt toward Znamenskaia Square on the east end of Nevskii. Along the way, approximately two hundred demonstrators broke the closed gates of the Orudinskii Factory, a munitions factory annexed to the Arsenal, inciting the workers there to join the demonstrators. The police pushed back the crowds, but 1,900 workers mingled with the demonstrators. Later, another group invaded the same factory from the direction of Shpalernaia Street, succeeding in completely stopping the work of 3,000 workers in a cartridge workshop, employing a tactic of forceful removal. Swollen by the infusion of the Orudinskii Factory, the crowd of about two thousand moved onto Liteinyi Prospekt. No sooner had they marched as far as Mariinskaiia Hospital, not far from Nevskii Prospekt, than the mounted police led by

26 *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, p. 163; Kondrat'ev 1922, p. 63; RGIA, f. 1282, op. 1, d. 741, ll. 112, 142.

27 Some historians underestimate the superiority of the police over the demonstrators on this day. For instance, Ferro 1967, p. 65, and Wettig 1967, p. 88. Wettig writes: 'The police were no longer the master of the situation'. This was not the case on 23 February, even in the Vyborg District.

28 Katkov writes that the street demonstrators were 'centred mainly on the Znamenskaia Square at the eastern end of the Nevskii Prospekt'. Katkov 1967, p. 247. Actually, together with Znamenskaia Square, Kazan Square was an important target for demonstrators. See Ferro 1967, pp. 72–3. Ferro's map is misleading; the demonstrators reached Kazan Square not only from the direction of Znamenskaia Square, but also from the north along the Fontanka and the Ekaterininskii Canal. Also the main route they took to reach Znamenskaia Square was not Znamenskaia Street, but Liteinyi Prospekt.

29 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 87; RGIA, f. 1278, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 143–4.

Colonel M.G. Shalfeev charged the demonstrators, driving them away immediately. During the melee, some demonstrators responded to the police attack by throwing rocks, wounding one of the policemen. The last attempt to reach Nevskii was made by a small group of demonstrators from the direction of Suvorov Prospekt at 7 p.m., but the police easily broke up the demonstration.³⁰

The demonstrators failed to achieve their primary aim of holding a mass rally either on Znamenskaia Square or on Kazan Square. Only a handful of them succeeded in reaching Nevskii, and even those who did were easily chased away by the police. Nevertheless, the demonstrators managed to disrupt the movement of the trams. They took tram keys away, disconnected electricity, and sometimes toppled cars. According to McKean nine cases were reported in the police reports where tram movement was stopped and keys removed.³¹

The workers' strike coincided with a revolt of the consumers. Around three o'clock in the afternoon about two hundred people, predominantly women and youths, who were standing in line in front of the Fillipov bakery in Bol'shoi Prospekt in the Petrograd District, heard the manager of the store announce that all the bread was sold out. No sooner had this announcement been made than the crowd smashed the windows, broke into the store and knocked down everything in sight, causing three to four thousand rubles of damage. At seven o'clock in the evening about one hundred youths marched along Suvorov Prospekt, breaking along the way the windows of a candy store, a meat shop and a vegetable store.³² Such vandalism was to increase sharply in the following days. All the revolutionary activists, the Bolsheviks included, had counselled the workers against vandalism. Recent Russian historians tend to characterise such acts of vandalism as criminal acts rather than revolutionary actions.³³ It is interesting to point out that mostly women and youths were involved in such cases. The workers' strike movement, which began on 23 February, was soon to absorb this element of society.

The anger of the demonstrators was directed against the police. A police officer, Kargelis, was struck on his head by the demonstrators when he was arresting a young worker or perhaps a hooligan stealing a key from a tram driver. Another officer, Grotgus, was beaten unconscious at Finland Station and received a cut by a sabre on the head, where he was arresting a worker. Alto-

30 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 11; Shliapnikov 1923c pp. 79–80; Document 5, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 23.

31 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 11; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 79–80; McKean 1990, p. 465.

32 GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669 (1917 g.), 289; RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 126; Document 5, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 24–5.

33 Aksenov 2001, p. 3; Ereshchenko 2003a, p. 94; Kolonitskii 2012, pp. 32–3.

gether four policemen were reportedly assaulted. There were at least thirteen clashes with the police this day.³⁴

Detecting the reluctance with which the Cossacks were fulfilling their orders, the demonstrators reacted to them differently. The *gradonachal'nik* himself noted the laxity of discipline among the Cossacks in the following instance during his inspection tour around the town:

On Nevskii Prospekt, the demonstrators, moving from sidewalks into the middle of the street, began to assemble across the city duma. A platoon of police ordered them to disperse in vain. The crowds grew bigger and louder. Noticing half a company of the Cossacks under the command of an officer indifferently watching the crowds at the Kazan Cathedral, I got out of the automobile, approached the officer, told him who I was, and ordered him to take a position of concentration immediately in full gallop and drive away the crowds without using weapons. The officer, still quite young, perplexedly looked at me, and gave the command with a sluggish voice. The Cossacks formed a platoon formation and ... moved slowly. Going together with them several steps, I shouted: 'On gallop!' The officer turned his horse 'on motion', and the Cossacks did the same, but the closer they got to the crowds, the slower their gallop became and finally they completely stopped ... But at the time the mounted police appeared from the Kazan Square and drove away the demonstrators.³⁵

Such incidents remained isolated, but the demonstrators read vacillation and awkward hesitation on the Cossacks' faces. Hope grew in the activists' mind: 'The soldiers are with us. They will not shoot'. And it was this hope that inspired them for the next day's action.

The Duma Liberals and the Strike Movement

The outbreak of the workers' strike movement coincided with the returning of the Duma deputies to the normal session after a two-day recess. The liberal

34 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 137–38; Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, pp. 163–4; Akaemov 1917, pp. vii–viii; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 84–5; GARF, f. DPOO, op. 341, ch. 57/1917, l. 15; Document 5, Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, p. 23; McKean 1990, p. 465.

35 Balk 1929 (Hoover), pp. 1–2; Chikolini also observed the Cossacks' passivity. See Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 72.

opposition, which had opened the Duma session on 14 February with pessimism and a sense of powerlessness, was suddenly alarmed by signs of a popular uprising. The Duma continued to debate the food shortage, but the focus of debate shifted to the general ineptitude of the government. A Kadet deputy, A.I. Shingarev, who was reputed to be an expert on agricultural affairs, criticised the speech made by Rittikh, minister of agriculture, in the Duma a few days before. The mistake that led to the current crisis was not caused by isolated economic factors such as the low fixed prices, Shingarev criticised, but by the government itself.

There was no uniform plan; I dare say there was no governmental power that could carry out a solution to the food problem systematically, seriously, thoughtfully and not along its own inflexible path.

Shingarev further pointed out that although the various societal (*obshchestvennye*) organisations such as the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos and the Petrograd City Duma had shown initiative in organising the food supply and had offered cooperation with the government, their sincere attempts had been frustrated by the government's stubborn refusal. Further commenting on Rittikh's plea not to play politics on this matter and to cooperate with the government without 'poisonous suspicion', Shingarev declared that it was the government itself that was playing politics. Isn't Rittikh's speech in the Duma itself, he asked, politics? Yes, 'a completely definite politics and a very old politics'. The applauding audience from the left added: 'Protopopov's politics'.³⁶

Rittikh's reply was almost drowned out by catcalls from the floor. The minister of agriculture remarked that he was disturbed by Shingarev's speech, because the Kadet did not seem to understand the tragic situation that the country found itself in – a situation that urgently demanded a practical solution.³⁷

Shingarev's criticism, however, was moderate, compared to the speeches delivered by the socialist deputies. Menshevik deputy Skobelev remarked that the country was, with catastrophic speed, rushing head-on to a dreadful upheaval. He continued:

What is happening in the streets? These unhappy, half-starved children, mothers, and wives, who had submissively and humbly stood in front of

36 Stenograficheskii otchet, 1917, pp. 1572–3, 1587, 1591–92.

37 Ibid., pp. 1594–95.

the bakeries and waited for bread for more than two years, finally lost patience, and perhaps helplessly, and even hopelessly, went out peacefully to the streets, hopelessly calling out: *bread*.

The food supply is not only a political question, he declared, but also a social question. This is the time when a wise government would have to devote all its energies to insure harmony of the classes, lest class antagonism and class struggle should disrupt the governmental forms. But such a policy cannot be expected from the Russian government, which brought to Russia nothing but 'chaos, a Sodom and Gomorrah, and signs of corruption and decay erupting everywhere'.

Skobelev's violent denunciation invited such stormy applause from the left and angry protests from the right that Rodzianko had to warn the speaker to adhere to the subject in question and refrain from inflammatory words. Not heeding Rodzianko's repeated warnings, Skobelev went on reminding the liberals on the floor of their 'forefathers in France and of their actions against the throne during the French Revolution'. Rodzianko finally ordered, amid pandemonium from the floor, that the speaker stop his speech.³⁸

Kerenskii, who followed Skobelev, pointed out that the current crisis was the inevitable consequence of the failure of the government to reorganise and revitalise national life at the beginning of the war, and warned that the *stikhiia* of the masses, who would not heed reason and words any longer, would overturn all political and social orders unless their demands were satisfactorily met. He remarked pessimistically that *stikhiia* had reached such a point that it would be impossible to establish a common language between the masses and the Duma.³⁹

No one thought that the strike and the demonstration that was happening while the Duma deputies were making speeches was a revolution. But conjuring up the memory of the French Revolution and the fear of uncontrollable masses in the streets, Skobelev and Kerenskii were attempting to urge the liberal colleagues to side with the strike movement. Responding to Kerenskii's statement, Shingarev remarked: '*Stikhiia*, gentlemen, is terrible; *stikhiia* should not control, but rather governmental intelligence should control the state in such a way that *stikhiia* would not be broken loose'.⁴⁰ What the liberal opposition had feared all along during the war was happening in reality. Nevertheless,

38 Ibid., pp. 1642, 1645, 1647, 1649.

39 Ibid., pp. 1649–50.

40 Ibid., pp. 1653–4, 1656.

they had no answer except to plead to the government to adopt a more intelligent policy. The Duma finally passed a motion presented by Miliukov that urged the government to take immediate measures to secure food for the people, to devote particular efforts to find a solution to the food shortage for workers engaged in the defence industry, and to entrust the food matter to the city self-governments and other organisations of society.⁴¹

By defining the roots of the strike movement narrowly as a food supply crisis, the Duma liberals deceived themselves by ignoring that the real cause of workers' discontents went beyond the food supply crisis. They themselves were fully aware of this plain fact, but they found this self-deception a convenient excuse for not crossing to the other side of the barricade. After the revolution, Miliukov stated: 'We did not want this revolution ... And we had desperately struggled so that this would not happen'.⁴²

As the temperature sharply dropped in the evening, exhausted demonstrators quietly returned home. Altogether twenty-one demonstrators had been arrested, an amazingly small figure considering the extent of the strike and the demonstration. By seven o'clock in the evening Nevskii became quiet again; or even quieter than usual, since people who would usually stroll along the boulevard had not appeared this day. A strong searchlight installed on the spire of the Admiralty illuminated the deserted Nevskii, making an eerie impression on the minister of internal affairs, who was taking an inspection tour around the city.⁴³

The Revolutionary Parties Map out the Next Strategy

Prior to the February Revolution, Chkheidze and Kerenskii took the initiative to create an 'All-Socialist Information Bureau' to coordinate activities of all socialists that cut across the party lines. As I have discussed in Chapter 11, the first meeting ended in a fiasco. But on 23 February, the second meeting was held at Maxim Gor'kii's apartment with the following participants: Chkheidze and Skoblev (Duma Mensheviks), Kerenskii (Trudovik), Zenzinov (right SR), Peshekhonov (Popular Socialist), and Erlich (Bund) from the right, Shliapnikov and V. Pozhello (Bolsheviks), A. Grinevich, Ermanskii and E. Sokolovskii (Initi-

41 Ibid., pp. 1657–60; RGIA, f. 1276, op. 10, d. 7, l. 468.

42 Miliukov, 'Pervey den', *Poslednie novosti*, 12 March 1927.

43 GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, l. 319; Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, p. 162; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, l. 170.

ative Group), Iurenev (Mezhraionka), and Aleksandrovich (left SR), and Gor'kii and Sokolov representing nonfactional Social Democrats. The 'All-Socialist Information Bureau' met again for the next two days, but according to Iurenev, these meetings held in 'the comfortable dining room of Gor'kii's apartment' were devoted merely to academic conversations of what he termed 'chatter-boxes'. Ermanskii recalled: 'No one said anything which would lead one to expect the imminent onset of the revolution'.⁴⁴ The All-Socialist Information Bureau was merely a loose gathering where the leaders of various socialist organisations exchanged information without any attempt to coordinate activities. It had no impact on the workers' strike movement that began on that day. Nevertheless, it is important to note that an embryo of the future Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet was already being formed.

While the top heavy Information Bureau had no impact on the workers, at the initiative of Iurenev the left socialists with closer connections to the workers decided to create their own 'information bureau'. This group consisted of Sokolovskii (Initiative Group), Pozhhello (Bolshevik Petersburg Committee – presumably without Shliapnikov's knowledge or approval), Iurenev (Mezhraionka), and Aleksandrovich (SR-Internationalist), and met on the evening of 23 February for the first time. This coalition immediately encountered difficulty when discussing what slogan should be presented to the masses. While the Initiative Group called for the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, Pozhhello proposed the creation of the soviet of workers' deputies in the form of the 1905 model. Iurenev, though expressing theoretical agreement with Pozhhello's proposal, considered the appeal for the creation of a soviet still premature.⁴⁵ Pozhhello and Sokolovskii never bothered to attend the subsequent meetings on the following days. Thus, far from its original intention, the attempt to form a united front of the left socialists did not go beyond the coalition of Mezhrainontsy and the SR-Internationalists.⁴⁶

On this night a member of the Bolshevik Vyborg District Committee, I. Chugurin, called for a joint meeting of the Petersburg Committee and the Vyborg District Committee at the apartment of a Bolshevik member, I. Aleksandrov, on Golovinskaia Street on the outskirts of the Vyborg District. The participants

44 Zenzinov 1953, p. 207; Iurenev 1924, pp. 136–7; Ermanskii 1927, pp. 136–7, Melancon 1990, pp. 236–7.

45 Iurenev 1924, pp. 138–9. It is not clear when the first meeting was held, on 23 February or 24 February.

46 Hasegawa 1981, pp. 325–6; Melancon 1990, p. 237. It is unlikely that Pozhhello's proposal for the creation of a soviet was made on 23 February; in that case, he must have attended at least the meeting of 24 or 25 February.

included A. Skorokhodov, K. Shutko from the Petersburg Committee, P. Zalutskii representing the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee, Chugurin, N. Sveshnikov and other Vyborg Committee members. They came to several important decisions concerning the future course of action and adopted a resolution calling for a three-day general strike and intensification of propaganda activities among the soldiers. The resolution reaffirmed the continuation of the demonstration on Nevskii. The Bolsheviks were urged to 'go to the factories and mills early in the morning ... [and] to lead as many workers as possible to the demonstration against the war at Kazan Cathedral'. Upon learning of the outcome of this meeting, Shliapnikov was disturbed by the radicalism of his subordinates. He thought that the call for a general strike was too mechanical and too irresponsible, for the party possessed neither resources nor strength to carry through an ill-prepared general strike.⁴⁷ However, he had little control over the Vyborg Bolsheviks, who had begun to take independent action.

The Workers' Group was also busy on that night. In the evening the Petrograd Union of Consumers called for a meeting of the representatives of the cooperatives, sick funds, and other workers' representatives under the influence of the Workers' Group in M.A. Semenov factory in Petrograd District. Some Bolsheviks, presumably as representatives of the sick funds, also attended. It was decided to urge the workers on the following day to stage a demonstration with the slogan 'Bread and peace!' and to direct it to the Tauride Palace. The Workers' Group organised a special propaganda team of Menshevik activists, but the police moved quickly and arrested all its members.⁴⁸ It is significant that both the Bolsheviks and the Workers' Group decided to support the strike on the following day.

47 Sveshnikov, 'Otryvki iz vospominanii', *Petrogradskaia pravda*, 14 March 1923; Sveshnikov 1967, p. 83; Shliapnikov 1923c p. 87. See the account of the *Pravda* correspondent on the events of 23 February, which is a mere description of the events rather than a call for action. See Document 4, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 21–2.

48 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 140; GARF, f. POO, 1917 g., d. 669a, ll. 63–4. It is not clear why the Bolsheviks who attended the meeting, if they did indeed attend, did not object to the Workers' Group's resolution to stage a demonstration at the Tauride Palace. It may well be that the strict discipline was not necessarily enforced among the members.

The Security Authorities Prepare for the Next Day

While leaders of the workers' movement were planning the next day's strategy, security authorities were also busy discussing what measures to employ to restore order. In the evening Khabalov convened a meeting in the office of the *gradonachal'stvo*, headquarters of the security authorities during the February days. In addition to Balk (*gradonachal'nik*), Vasil'ev (director of the police department), Colonel Pavlenkov (commander of troops in Petrograd), Major-General Globachev (chief of the Petrograd Okhrana), and Major-General Kazakov (commander of the gendarme division), commanders of various reserve battalions also attended the meeting.⁴⁹ Balk briefed them on the day's developments, calling particular attention to the dangerous signs of the Cossacks' reluctance to suppress the demonstration. Colonel S.A. Troilin, commander of the Cossack Regiment, explained that most of the Cossacks were inexperienced in the suppression of internal disorder and that their horses were unaccustomed to the hard pavement and narrow streets clustered with tall buildings. Furthermore, he continued, the Cossacks were not given the necessary equipment. How could they effectively attack demonstrators without nagaikas, he asked. Khabalov immediately ordered that each Cossack be given fifty kopeiks to purchase a nagaika.⁵⁰

A nagaika is a whip constructed of a stick about fifteen inches long with a leather thong of about twenty inches. At the end of the leather thong there are two small pieces of leather about an inch in diameter that enclose a piece of lead. A Cossack could use a nagaika with dexterity. He could brush a fly from one's face without touching the skin, or he could maim one for life. According to a British eyewitness, Stinton Jones, at one demonstration a Cossack attacked a young demonstrator with a nagaika. 'In an instant his coat was cut through and soon the whole of that side was saturated with blood from the deep wound'. On another occasion, a whip of a nagaika 'caught a face of a woman ... and gashed it open to the bone'.⁵¹ The meeting decided to make the second stage of the contingency plan fully effective. Troops would be deployed to assigned military districts to protect important positions of the city.⁵²

Protopopov was in constant touch with Vasil'ev. The director of the police department assured Protopopov that the government need not worry about the movement much, since it was spontaneous and lacked organised action by

49 Balk 1929 (Hoover), pp. 2–3; Ganelin 2014a, p. 80.

50 Balk 1929 (Hoover), p. 3.

51 Jones 1917, pp. 85–6.

52 Balk 1929 (Hoover), p. 3; Ganelin 2014a, p. 81.

revolutionary forces. He predicted that by the next morning the workers would resume their normal work. Protopopov agreed, and conveyed this optimistic opinion to the empress in Tsarskoe Selo through the assistant commandant of the palace, General P.P. Groten.⁵³ Golitsyn also thought that they were simple street demonstrations that would be quickly dealt with by the police.⁵⁴ Those who watched the movement more closely, however, did not share such optimism. Okhrana agents accurately reported on the general atmosphere in the streets, and warned the government that the movement might develop into an uprising. One of the reports stated:

The shortage of bread is driving the masses of workers to action. They are more and more convinced that an uprising is the only way out of this blind alley of the food problem. Now everybody in the street is talking about an uprising, as if it were near and inevitable.

Another Okhrana agent reported that some soldiers in the Semenovskii Regiment openly spoke about their intention to shoot into the air, if they received an order to fire upon the demonstrators. On the basis of these reports the *gradonachal'nik* recommended to Khabalov that strict censorship should be imposed to prevent the news of the reduction of the ration from spreading to the populace.⁵⁵ Okhrana agents assessed the situation more accurately than anyone else, including the revolutionary leaders.

It is not difficult to see the direct cause for the strike on 23 February was shortage of food. The slogan 'Bread' drove the textile workers in the Vyborg District into the street. It united the striking workers with the women and the youths standing in a long queue, while it unnerved the soldiers sent to suppress the demonstrators. But the 23 February strike was not simply a bread riot. The demand for bread was a symbolic expression of their deep disapproval of the system itself. Despite the persistent claim that the February Revolution was 'a spontaneous' revolution, this claim must be put to rest. As soon as the strike began with the women textile workers with the slogan, 'Bread!', the 'conscious' elements of the experienced activists of the large metal factories joined and assumed leadership of the strike and the demonstration. As McKean states,

53 Supplementary deposition of Protopopov, Padenie, 1925, vol. 4, p. 96; GARF, ChSK, d. 466, ll. 169–70.

54 Deposition of Golitsyn, Padenie 1925, vol. 2, p. 262.

55 Burdzhakov 1967, pp. 134–5, Document 1, 'Doneshenie Petrogradskogo gradonachal'nika', Fevral'slaia revoliutsiia 1996, pp. 17–18.

The February revolution was 'spontaneous' only in the sense that none of the revolutionary organisations actually planned the strikes and demonstrations which erupted on 23 February and took their leaders by surprise.⁵⁶

Although the strike movement remained on this day merely a local event in the Vyborg District and to a lesser degree in the Petrograd District, there emerged on that first day unmistakable signs to predict the future development. The strike spread in the Vyborg District more quickly and more violently than ever before and, moreover, it was accompanied by persistent attempts by the workers to stage a demonstration in the centre of the city. No one noticed, but the February Revolution was already one day old.

56 McKean 1990, p. 469.

The Second Day: February 24

Strikes Expanded throughout the City

The cold, misty morning of 24 February began as any other morning. Smokestacks and brick factories were silhouetted through a veil of that typical Petrograd fog that seemed to seep into the bones with its freezing wetness. But on this day, instead of the repressive silence that usually fell upon the hordes of workers hurrying to the factories, an unusual excitement filled the workers' district. Behind the morning fog, the strike organisers, like ants, moved busily. No single revolutionary headquarters ordered them to organise a strike. Nor was there any organisational unity among the activists. But regardless of political persuasions, these activists acted as one body. The workers were greeted by the activists' speeches for strike and demonstration at the factory gates. In many factories political rallies were organised at seven o'clock in the morning.¹

As on the previous day, the Vyborg District led the strike and demonstration. In Erikson SR and Bolshevik activists called for the continuation of the strike to protest against inflation, the shortage of bread, the war and the autocracy. Further appealing to the workers to stage a massive rally in Kazan Square, they urged them to arm themselves with knives, hardware, and pieces of ice.² Cut off from higher revolutionary organisations, ad hoc factory meetings served as information centres for the masses, where activists of all hues cooperated rather than competing to move the initiated strike movement into a general strike.³ In Aivaz Factory north of the Vyborg District, which was controlled by moderate socialists, more than thirty-five hundred workers gathered in the automation section. The orators stressed the importance of unity, while appealing to the Duma to remove the government and appealing to the workers to act in an organised fashion without resorting to irresponsible acts. Railway workers, tram workers and postal and telegraph workers also joined the Aivaz strikers.⁴

As on the previous day, after abandoning work, the major contingent strikers from the metal factories moved to the Arsenal, Petrograd Cartridge Factory

1 For the most recent description of the events on 24 February, see Ganelin 2014b, pp. 86–100.

2 Mil'chik 1931, p. 69; Leiberov 1970b, p. 101.

3 McKean 1990, pp. 470–1.

4 Leiberov 1970b, p. 101; Document 8, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 28.

and Promet, removing all workers from these factories. An SR worker-activist, Markov, describes how the activists of various parties – SRs, Bolsheviks, and Mensheviks – organised the ‘removal’ of the Arsenal workers, but as it turned out the Arsenal workers in all workshops had already left work to join the strike over the protest of their foremen. ‘To Nevskii!’ was the slogan of the strikers who poured into Simbirskaya Street.⁵ In the Vyborg District 74,842 workers of 61 factories, more than two-thirds of the total workforce, participated in the strike, constituting a third of the total strikers in Petrograd on this day.⁶

Not all the orators were experienced political activists, however. The strike movement itself created numerous leaders, who, acting independently of any political organisations, gave the masses of workers a sense of direction. Okhrana agent Krest’anov vividly recorded the speech and the actions of one of the otherwise anonymous leaders, a certain Petr Tikhonov in Stetin in Novaya Derevnia, who delivered the following at a meeting:

Comrades, as you all know, yesterday, 23 February, the entire Vyborg District did not work. So, comrades, we must quit our work today, support union with other comrades and go to get bread by ourselves. Comrades, my opinion is this. If we cannot get a loaf of bread for ourselves in a righteous way, then we must do everything; we must go ahead and solve our problem by force. Only in this way will we be able to get bread for ourselves. Comrades, remember this also. Down with the government! Down with the war! Comrades, arm yourselves with everything possible – bolts, screws, rocks, and go out of the factory and start smashing the first shops you find.⁷

After this speech Tikhonov led the workers to a nearby factory. The invaders demanded that all the workers should quit work and threw rocks at those remaining in the building. Then Tikhonov’s mob proceeded to Finland Station, stopping trains and driving passengers out of wagons. Tikhonov then suddenly decided to lead to the Tauride Palace. They moved on to the Liteinyi Bridge, ransacking bakeries on their way.⁸

⁵ Markov quoted in Melancon 1990, pp. 245–56.

⁶ RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 16, 26; Leiberov 1970b, p. 102; Document 8, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 28.

⁷ *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, p. 167. For a different interpretation on Tikhonov, see Melancon 1990, p. 247.

⁸ *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, pp. 167–8.

The demonstrators coming from Sampsonievskii Prospekt and Simbirskaia Street moved toward Liteinyi Bridge. By nine o'clock in the morning the crowds reached 40,000. The protection of Liteinyi Bridge was even tighter this day. In addition to the police under the command of Colonel Shalfeev, two-and-a-half companies of Cossacks and two companies of the Moscow Regiment, altogether 520 armed soldiers and police, awaited the arrival of the demonstrators.⁹

As the crowd moved on Sampsonievskii Prospekt toward the bridge, the officers suddenly commanded the Cossacks to attack the approaching demonstrators. As soon as the demonstrators faced the galloping Cossacks with unsheathed sabres, the festive mood that had dominated among them, amid laughter and singing, changed to sudden panic. There was nothing with which to protect themselves, nor was there room to run away. The officers charged into the crowds. Then galloping Cossacks followed the officers, filling the full width of the streets. The terrified demonstrators must have expected bloodshed at any moment. But an amazing thing happened. The Bolshevik Kaiurov recalls: 'But, what joy! The Cossacks rushed in one line through the "hole" just made by the officers. Some of them smiled; and one of them even winked at the workers'. Jubilant cheers echoed in the streets. No one was hurt. 'This wink was not without meaning', Trotskii writes. 'The workers were emboldened with a friendly, not hostile, kind of assurance, and slightly infected the Cossacks with it'. In spite of repeated orders by officers, the Cossacks refused to attack the demonstrators. After the same scene was repeated four times, the officers, realising the uselessness of the endeavour, gave up hope of dispersing the crowds. The Cossacks returned to their former position in front of the demonstrators.¹⁰ Those who stood at the head of the demonstration began talking with the Cossacks. Old women took the first steps toward them and pleaded: 'We have our husbands, fathers, and brothers at the front. But here we have hunger, hard times, injustices, shame. The government mocks us instead of helping us. You also have your mothers, wives, sisters, and children. All we want is bread and to end the war'.¹¹

The officers attempted to separate the Cossacks from the workers by lining up the Cossacks across the street to block movement of the workers forward. The emboldened demonstrators, however, dared to dive under the belly of the Cossacks' horses. The Cossacks, still mounted, made no attempt to prevent

9 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 641, l. 16.

10 Kaiurov 1923, pp. 159–60; Trotsky 1932, vol. 1, p. 104.

11 Gordienko 1956, p. 57.

them. As Trotskii commented, 'The revolution does not choose its paths: it made its first steps toward victory under the belly of a Cossack's horse'.¹²

The demonstrators massed in front of the police and the Cossacks guarding Liteinyi Bridge. Shalfeev at first tried to persuade the crowds to disperse peacefully. But, realising that the demonstrators were sneaking through the bridge by diving under the horses, he ordered the mounted police to attack. The police whipped those crossing the bridge with nagaikas, while the Cossacks stood neutral. Although the neutrality of the Cossacks made the attack of the police less effective – Kaiurov saw visible signs of confusion and apprehension in Shalfeev – it was nevertheless impossible for the demonstrators to break through the heavy cordon. Someone shouted: 'Comrades, let's go on the ice!' About 5,000 people crossed the Neva on the ice to Liteinyi Prospekt. However, no sooner had they reached the street than the waiting police charged, driving them either toward the Circuit Court or to Voskresenskii Prospekt. The first group of demonstrators reassembled on Frantsuzkaia Naberezhnaia only to be scattered again by the combined forces of the police and patrols of the Ninth Reserve Cavalry Regiment. The other group was further pushed back to the Vyborg side of the river by the gendarmes.¹³ On this day, more demonstrators managed to reach the other side of the river much earlier than on the previous day, but they met stiff resistance by the police. The streets in the city's centre were still under the secure control of the police.

Although Vyborg District continued to be the centre of the movement, the strike spread to all districts of the city. In Petrograd District, demonstrations originated in three areas. In the western part about 4,500 workers from six factories including Vulkan held a political rally and moved along Bol'shoi Prospekt and from there toward Kamenoostrovskii Prospekt. Also 4,000 workers of five small factories in the southern section of the island and 5,500 workers of the ten small factories in the north moved from the opposite direction to Kamenoostrovskii Prospekt. Many university students, high school students, and vocational students had joined the workers.¹⁴ The demonstrators from these three directions converged into one group in the centre of the district, and moved toward Troitskii Bridge to cross the Neva. At the corner of Kamenoostrovskii and Bol'shoi Prospekts, according to the police report, a few shots were fired from one of the houses at the demonstrators, killing an

12 Kaiurov 1923, p. 160; Trotsky 1932, vol. 1, p. 105.

13 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 23–24, 42; Akaemov 1917, p. xi; Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 91; Leiberov 1970b, pp. 111–12.

14 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 55; Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, p. 164; Document 8, Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1966, pp. 27–8.

unidentified young woman who was watching the demonstration on the sidewalk. She became the first victim of the February Revolution. Another worker was also shot in the rear, and testified that the shots came from the police. A seventeen-year old student of a vocational school was arrested for disseminating a 'malicious, unfounded rumour' that the police had shot the demonstrators.¹⁵ Reacting to the incident, the crowd attacked the police by throwing rocks and pieces of ice. The demonstrators moved toward the bridge, but a squad of mounted police, which had formed a line across the street, charged the slowly approaching demonstrators, driving them to the sidewalk. In Petrograd District as well, police continued to control the situation.

On 24 February in this district, 22,596 workers from forty factories participated in the strike. In contrast to the demonstration in the Vyborg District, the demonstration in the Petrograd District was accompanied by more vandalism – police records show at least eight cases in this district alone. Bakeries, meat shops, milk stores and other food stores were the main targets. The most violent attacks took place at the city food store. Crowds, mostly women and youths, broke into the store, turned over the counters and shelves, destroyed the cashiers' desks, and stole the money. The police arrived at the scene and arrested a young woman, but the excited crowd threw rocks and bottles at the police.¹⁶

Some of the striking workers of Vyborg and Petrograd districts broke through the police cordons at Tuchkov and Birzha bridges on the Small Neva, and reached Vasil'evskii Island. The first group of five hundred such workers moved along Malyi Prospekt toward the electrical manufacturing factory, Siemens-Galiske, but their attempt to break into the premises was thwarted by the police. As the reassembled Vyborg workers reached the factory gate, the activists in the factory (Bolsheviks, Mezhraintsy, and srs) succeeded in persuading their fellow workers to abandon their work. The strikers of Siemens-Galiske, joined by the workers in the neighbouring factories, moved along Malyi Prospekt toward the Harbour (Gavan'), the island's largest industrial complex.¹⁷ When the demonstrators reached the 17th Line, they attacked the Military Horseshoes Factory by breaking windows; some broke in, disrupting work. The soldiers of Finland Regiment were brought in to restore order, but the disturbances lasted for four hours. Finally, the factory completely stopped work, and

15 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 34–5; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917, l. 96.

16 Akaemov 1917, p. xii; Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 96; Leiberov 1970b, p. 104; RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 14–5, 32–58; GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, l. 319; Document 8, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 28–9.

17 Leiberov 1970b, p. 105.

the workers went home. During this confrontation, some demonstrators also attacked food stores on Srednyi Prospekt. One student of the Psychoneurological Institute was arrested for his inflammatory speech, and leaflets, presumably issued by the Mezhraiontsy, demanding the end of the war and the establishment of a Social-Democratic republic, were confiscated.¹⁸

In the Harbour (Gavan') District on Vasil'evskii Island, the military electro-manufacturing factory, Siemens-Schuckert, was the centre of the strike movement. About three thousand workers led by the revolutionary underground activists abandoned work and actively engaged in the agitation in neighbouring factories – Baltic Shipyard, Nail Factory, and Petrograd Cable Factory. More than 10,000 workers of these factories joined the strike. On Vasil'evskii Island 23,248 workers of 28 factories struck, more than one-third of the total number of workers in the district. Also, students of Petrograd University and Bestuzhev Women's College organised a political demonstration on Bol'shoi Prospekt.¹⁹

Strikes and demonstrations took place in other districts as well. In Narva District the soldiers of the Petrograd and Eger regiments laid siege to the major factories, such as Siemens-Schuckert, Skorokhod, Dinamo, and Moscow Tram Park, preventing the workers from organising meetings. Moreover, the Putilov workers could not provide leadership, since the factory still continued the lock-out. Nevertheless, more than 9,000 workers of 25 factories joined the strike.²⁰ In the Moscow District altogether 19,506 workers of 23 factories were involved in what were the most violent demonstrations organised. Police reported that young hooligans, mostly between the ages of 12 and 15, marched along Zvenigorodskaiia Street, destroying the windows of the nineteen stores along the way. Also a tobacco store, a bakery, and a drugstore on Pushkin Street were attacked by 500 demonstrators, mostly women and youths.²¹

The strike movement spread further, not only to the outskirts of the city, Okhta, Nevskii District and Novaia Derevnia, but also to its centre. In Liteinaia District 6,000 workers in the Orudinskii Factory were 'removed' again by the Vyborg workers, who had crossed the Neva. The Artillery Administration closed the factory in the morning. In Kolomenskaia District workers of the Franco-Russian Factory held a meeting at seven o'clock in the morning in the machine

18 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 43, 52–3; Document 8, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 29.

19 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 43–4; Leiberov 1970b, pp. 106–7; Khodnev 1997, p. 266.

20 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 50; Leiberov 1970b, p. 107. Leiberov's figures are 35,795 strikers of 26 factories, but they contain the Putilov Factory, which remained locked out. I subtracted 26,000 workers from Leiberov's figures.

21 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 13, 20–1; Document 8, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*, p. 29.

workshop, where speakers spoke both for and against the strike. The factory's administration gave the workers an ultimatum to return to work by eleven o'clock, but by three o'clock in the afternoon only 50 workers out of 6,656 remained in the factory. In the Naval Admiralty Shipyard, a usually conservative state factory, out of 5,916 workers only 390 continued to work. In the three districts located in the heart of the city, 16,421 workers of 22 factories joined the strike.²²

On 24 February, the strike participants reached at least 158,000 and the struck factories 131, almost doubling the size of the strike on the previous day.²³ Never before during the war were so many people involved in a strike on a single day. The driving force of the strike movement was provided, as on the previous day, by veteran activists of the metal factories in the Vyborg District, but the strike spread to the gigantic munitions factories as well as to small factories, those that, during the war, had never before joined a strike.²⁴ Looting and vandalism sharply increased, signifying that the attempts by conscious activists to organise strikes and demonstrations and the pent-up anger of the lower stratum of society were being forged into one combined force.

Demonstrations on Nevskii

The first columns of demonstrators appeared in Nevskii by eleven o'clock in the morning. Thousands, from all parts of the city, followed the first column, driving the well-dressed public from the street. According to Leiberov, during the day thirteen columns of demonstrations consisting altogether of 36,800 demonstrators marched in Nevskii, Liteinyi, Suvorov, Zagorodnyi Prospekts, and Ligovskaia Street – an event unprecedented since 1905.²⁵

The demonstrators held at least four rallies at Kazan Square: each time the police assisted by Cossacks and platoons of the Ninth Cavalry Regiment dispersed the crowds, but each time the demonstrators came back in great numbers, and each time it took the police longer and more reinforcements

22 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 23, 29–30.

23 This figure is based on the Okhrana records. Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, p. 164; Document 8, Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, pp. 27–33. According to the materials of the *gradonachal'stvo*, the number of strikers and of the struck factories were respectively 197,000 and 131. Akaemov 1917, p. xi; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 143. According to Leiberov, it was 214,111 and 22. Leiberov 1970b, p. 111.

24 Hasegawa 1981, Appendix 2, col. 15.

25 Leiberov 1970b, p. 112.

were needed. On the other side of Nevskii at Znamenskaia Square as well a mass political rally was held. Speaker after speaker stood on the statue of Alexander III – the hippopotamus, as the workers called it – demanding bread and denouncing the war and autocracy. Speeches were largely incoherent, but as one of the participants, Mil'chik, stated, 'logic and coherency were not needed by the people ... The first free speech under the open sky in front of the massive crowds in full view of the Cossacks and the police was perceived by heart and sounded like music'.²⁶

A platoon of a training detachment of the Volynskii Regiment arrived at Znamenskaia Square. The assistant commander was a non-commissioned officer, Sergeant T. Kirpichnikov, a sympathiser of the demonstrators. The crowds approached the officers pleading with them not to shoot and were assured by Kirpichnikov that the soldiers would not fire. He persuaded his commander to let the demonstrators pass as long as they moved down the sidewalk.²⁷

Although the police and troops still managed to disperse the crowds, the demonstration clearly expanded in its effectiveness as well as in number. Onlookers showed their sympathy with cheers – wounded soldiers in the hospitals enthusiastically waved at the demonstrators. As they passed, residents along Nevskii opened their windows and watched the unusual scene. On Nevskii trams completely stopped, as tram drivers refused to drive even under police protection. Stores, restaurants, and cafes, which usually remained open until late in the evening, closed their doors early in the afternoon. The last demonstrators left Nevskii at eight o'clock in the evening and as they left for their quarters, they reassured one another: 'We will see you tomorrow on Nevskii'.²⁸

The Revolutionary Parties Failed to Create a Coordinating Centre

The rapid development of the strike movement on this day encouraged the political activists. The Bolshevik Russian Bureau of the Central Committee held meetings several times during the day and decided to expand the movement to the soldiers 'without restricting this offensive to any kind of mechanical res-

26 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 38–41; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 92–3; *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, p. 166; Akaemov 1917, p. xiii; Document 8, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 29–30. According to Leiberov, six rallies involving 15,400 participants were held in Nevskii. Leiberov 1970b, p. 115; Mil'chik 1931, p. 72.

27 Kirpichnikov 1917, pp. 5–6.

28 Kaiurov 1923, p. 161; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 88, 90, 100; Anet 1917, p. 11.

olution calling for a three-day general strike as was done by the Petersburg Committee'. It further decided to dispatch a messenger to the Moscow organisation to inform the Bolsheviks in Moscow of recent developments in Petrograd. The Vyborg District Committee met in Okhta in the evening with almost all the members participating. Sveshnikov states: 'The atmosphere was exuberant, but we felt the absence of common leadership, and bad communication from other districts. The correct revolutionary direction of the Russian Bureau was really needed'.²⁹ It demanded that the Russian Bureau issue a manifesto to the workers that clearly defined the political goals of the current strike movement. It also passed a resolution introduced by Chugurin calling for a general strike and intensified efforts in the struggle against the police and in the agitation among the masses.³⁰ In the evening Shliapnikov took an inspection tour on Nevskii. Rather than arranging a meeting with the Petersburg and Vyborg committees, he returned directly to the apartment of the Pavlovs in the Vyborg District, where he found the party activists in the Vyborg District – Kaiurov, Chugurin, Kuklin, Skorokhodov, and others – gathered and exchanging opinions. According to Shliapnikov,

To all it was clear that a revolution had begun and Russia had begun to shake. The revolutionary movement involved such a wide range of circles that no one doubted that a decisive battle had begun.³¹

It is unlikely, however, that the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee took it for granted that a revolution had begun. Actually, it continued to hesitate about throwing all its organisational support behind the strike movement. Chugurin must have pressed Shliapnikov to assert stronger leadership and, particularly, to issue a manifesto. Yet the Russian Bureau failed to draft a manifesto clarifying where it stood on the current strike movement. The inaction of the Russian Bureau deeply disappointed the party activists at the lower level.

Only the Mezhraiontsy managed to issue a declaration to the workers on this day. Their leaflet called for a strike in support of the Putilov workers, and stated: 'Hunger will not be eliminated either by the destruction of stores or by marching to the Duma. Only a revolution will get us out of the blind alley of war

29 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 87; Sveshnikov 1967, p. 83; N. Sveshnikov, 'Otryvki iz vospominanii', *Petrogradskaia prava*, 14 March 1923.

30 *Vospominaniia I.D. Chugurina* deposited in the Leningrad Party Archives, quoted in Leiberov 1966, p. 37.

31 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 90.

and misery'. It appealed for a democratic republic, socialism, and the creation of a provisional revolutionary government.³² Melancon asserts that this leaflet 'suggests both a definite awareness of and a desire to capitalize on the general revolutionary situation'.³³ By characterising the strike movement as a continuation of the Putilov strike, however, this leaflet indicates that the Mezhraiontsy did not fully comprehend that a completely new stage of the strike movement had already begun on the previous day, let alone any possibility of this movement touching off a full-fledged revolution. Nevertheless, distribution of the leaflet itself was significant in giving the workers a sense of direction. As Melancon notes, the most significant aspect of this leaflet was to call the workers to appeal to the soldiers to take the side of the strikers, and he cites the SR worker Markov, who wrote that on this day the worker activists make the first verbal appeals to the soldiers.³⁴

It is difficult to establish the activities of other revolutionary organisations. A small number of radical Socialist Revolutionaries represented by Aleksandrovich and S. Maslovskii continued activities in cooperation with the Mezhraiontsy. The Mensheviks tried to organise a literary committee for the purpose of propaganda among the workers. A small number of the Menshevik intelligentsia gathered and contacted Chkheidze and Chkhenkeli in the Duma. A leader of the Initiative Group, Ermanskii, noted: 'If someone had asked me what would be the outcome of this movement, I would not have been able to give him a definite answer ... As for our admittedly weak Workers' Initiative Group, it did not meet during these days'.³⁵

The representatives of the workers' sick funds and cooperatives were more actively involved. As mentioned in the previous chapter, on the previous day the activists under the influence of the Workers' Group had met at the Semenov Factory and had decided to support the strike and to direct the demonstration to the Tauride Palace. Only a small group of workers went to the Duma on this day.³⁶ Nevertheless, this did not necessarily mean that a majority of the demonstrators rejected the Workers' Group's policy. Whether they staged a demonstration in Nevskii or at the Tauride Palace did not have as much significance as some Soviet-era historians claim. Since 14 February police protection around the Tauride Palace was extremely heavy, and moreover, the barracks

32 Burdzhlov 1967, p. 155; Iurennev 1924, p. 140.

33 Melancon 1990, p. 243.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 244.

35 Burdzhlov 1967, p. 156; GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, l. 315; Ermanskii 1927, pp. 141–2.

36 Leiberov 1970b, pp. 117–18.

of the Preobrazhenskii, Volynskii and Lithuanian regiments were located in between the Tauride Palace and Liteinyi Prospekt – an important deterrent to a demonstration at the Tauride Palace.

In the evening the Workers' Group held an emergency meeting at the Central War Industries Committee with the remaining members, who had escaped arrest, and other workers. The Okhrana was informed about the meeting, and sent a police official accompanied by a detachment of about 25 soldiers of the Volynskii Regiment. Tereshchenko, and later Guchkov, rushed to the meeting, and negotiated with the police chief, but the police chief adamantly refused to have the workers holding a meeting. Soon an officer of the Volynskii Regiment appeared and ordered the soldiers to arrest the workers, whereupon the soldiers fulfilled this order, though sullenly and reluctantly. At the police station, the arrested workers were divided into two groups: one group was immediately released, while the other was detained. One of the arrested cheerfully remarked: 'One more push and we win! Just do not give up'. Tereshchenko wondered how such confidence in such a situation was possible.³⁷

At the factory level considerable cooperation existed among various revolutionary party members. It appears that in the absence of any definite instructions from the central party organisations, interparty cooperation in the factories played a more important part in the strike movement during the February Revolution. Burdzhhalov, recognising the importance of this cooperation, states: 'In the streets of Petrograd, the Mensheviks, SRS, and nonparty workers fought together with the Bolshevik workers. In the course of this struggle the unity of their aims took shape and the unity of their action was formed', an interpretation that was unique among Soviet historians during the Soviet days.³⁸

The Duma Responds to the Strike and Demonstration

While the workers waged demonstrations in the streets, the Duma continued its debate about food distribution. After the right-wing deputies denounced liberal and socialist critics for utilising the crisis for their sinister political purposes, Shingarev again led an attack upon the government. He outlined in more detail than on the previous day the efforts of the Petrograd city duma to solve the food problem, and referred to the resolutions passed by the city duma as well as by the State Duma urging the government to transfer responsibilities

37 Tereshchenko interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 252–5.

38 Burdzhhalov 1967, p. 155.

to the local self-government. Bitterly criticising the government's refusal to consider these resolutions, Shingarev declared: 'We must demand from our government an immediate answer to the question ... what measures it will take and is taking to feed sufficiently the population in large cities in the country'.³⁹ Shingarev repeated that the only way to supply food adequately would be to transfer all authority to the Petrograd city duma.

F.I. Rodichev, a Kadet deputy from Petrograd, advanced the criticism further than his colleague. What is at issue is, he said, not only the matter of the government's handling of food distribution, but also the general competence of the government. He declared: 'Give us those people whom all Russia can believe. We demand above all the expulsion from it of persons whom all Russia despises'.⁴⁰ Rodichev's speech was greeted with prolonged applause from the floor. Speeches by Shingarev and Rodichev indicated that the Kadets were still clinging to the hope that the government concessions, either the transfer of the food supply question to the city duma or the formation of a ministry of confidence, would lead to the solution of the current crisis.⁴¹

The socialist deputies poured cold water on such a pipe dream, and urged the liberals to go over to the other side of the barricade. Chkhaidze pointed out the impossibility of reaching a compromise with the government. 'The interests of this government are absolutely and diametrically in contradiction to the interests of the country and interests of the people', Chkhaidze thundered, 'We must say: it is impossible to enter into negotiations with this government on whatever repentance, whatever compromise, whatever agreements, and whatever slogans. What other conclusions can we draw from this? But, gentlemen, you are not making this conclusion'.⁴² Sooner or later, he continued, the struggle they were witnessing would reach the point where not only the government but also the fundamental structure on which it was based would be eliminated and replaced by a new system created by the people's own initiative. 'I greet all sorts of radical resolutions of yours', but he pointed out that when people went out in the streets, declaring a civil war and prepared to face machine guns, passing resolutions would be futile. The Menshevik deputy thus appealed to his liberal colleagues to establish contact with the movement in the street by asserting their leadership. In the streets there already existed 'free organisations, arbitrary and without any sanction of legal institutions', arising

39 Stenograficheskii otchet 1917, pp. 1704–10.

40 Ibid., pp. 1713–14.

41 Startsev 1980, p. 11.

42 Stenograficheskii otchet 1917, p. 1721.

spontaneously from the workers' movement. Lacking, according to the Men-shevik vision of revolution, was the participation of the 'bourgeoisie' in the movement.

Kerenskii followed Chkheidze's main theme, and urged the Duma liberals to create 'truly democratic organisations of society, which now, today, will create a stronghold against the licentious passions of *stikhiia*'. Any appeal coming from this 'legal institution' within the framework of the old political structure would have no meaning whatsoever. It was not words but actions that the current crisis demanded.⁴³ Without anyone noticing it, Kerensky was already positioning himself as the leader of the revolution that was to come in a few days.

A deputy from Samara Province, S.A. Krylov, reported to the audience the incident he had just witnessed at Znamenskaia Square. The crowds who filled the square greeted the Cossacks with resounding hurrahs because the Cossacks chased away the police who had beaten an old woman with a nagaika. The audience on the left greeted this news with prolonged applause and burst into exclamations: 'Bravo', 'Hurrah!'⁴⁴

The Duma overwhelmingly passed Shingarev's motion to ask the government about the measures it was taking in trying to solve the food question. This day's debate demonstrated that the Duma shifted its emphasis from the discussion on food distribution to over-all denunciation of the government. A call for a revolution, which had been suppressed by the chairman on the previous day, was frequently heard on the floor this day and enthusiastically applauded by the audience.

But the city duma itself remained hostile to the demonstrators who appeared at the Duma building.

The Government Reacts to the Strike and Demonstration

While the workers effectively expanded the movement, the government reacted to the crisis in a most unimaginative fashion. The Council of Ministers held a meeting on this day at the Mariinskii Palace from one to six p.m. Protopopov did not even bother to attend the meeting.

To convey the sentiments of the Duma, Rodzianko met Golitsyn, urging him to call a joint emergency meeting of the government and the Duma

43 Ibid., pp. 1726–8.

44 Ibid., p. 1730.

representatives to solve the food problem. On the evening of 24 February this meeting, attended by the four cabinet ministers and representatives of the Special Councils, as well as by the representatives of the Duma and the State Council, unanimously decided to transfer the distribution of food in Petrograd to the jurisdiction of the Petrograd city дума.⁴⁵ Protopopov was pointedly not invited to this meeting.

Before this meeting, Golitsyn sent a telegram to the tsar, informing him that in order to solve the 'disturbances in the streets', he intended to convene a joint meeting inviting four ministers (war, navy, agriculture, trade and industry), the chairman of the Duma, and the city mayor to discuss the mechanism of food supply issue. This was the first information about the unrest in the capital conveyed to the emperor.⁴⁶

The security authorities met at the office of the *gradonachal'stvo*. The overall objective of the security authorities continued to be the dispersal of the demonstrators. To achieve this objective, it was necessary to isolate the workers in various sections of the city and to keep them from joining together in the city's centre. The police controlled the main bridges, but as on the previous day, the frozen Neva impeded their objective of blocking the demonstrators at the bridges. Khabalov failed to adopt any measure to prevent the workers from crossing the river. War Minister Beliaev, irritated by the same news of the demonstrators' crossing the river on ice, impetuously advised Khabalov by telephone to shoot at the crowds on the ice 'in such a way that the bullets would hit the ice in front of them'. Khabalov, rejecting this impossible advice, adhered to his original plan: at the second stage firearms would not be used.⁴⁷

One can appreciate the incredulous short-sightedness of this inflexible adherence to the already mapped-out contingency plan when one learns that during these two days twenty-eight policemen were assaulted by demonstrators. On the second day, particularly, the demonstrators' attack on police grew more vicious, as instances of reported sniper fire demonstrated. Their most favoured targets were policemen in stationary sentinel boxes. *Gradonachal'nik* Balk asked Khabalov for either more troop reinforcements to protect sentinel police or for the complete withdrawal of policemen from sentinel posts.

45 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 10, d. 7, ll. 466, 469; Document 6, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 26; Deposition of Beliaev, *Padenie* 1925, vol. 2, p. 231; Rodzianko 1922, p. 56; Kulikov 2014a, p. 167; Ganelin 2014B, p. 95.

46 Golitsyn to Nicholas II, 24 February 1917, RGIA f. 472, d. 605, l. 16, quoted in Kulikov 2014a, p. 167. Kulkov discovered this telegram, correcting the prevailing view that the government failed to inform the tsar of the unrest in the capital until 25 February.

47 Martynov 1927, p. 72; Blok 1922, p. 26.

Khabalov agreed only to reduce the number of sentinel posts by half, while increasing simultaneously the number of policemen at each post to two, in other words, increasing the number of sitting ducks from one to two.⁴⁸

Khabalov interpreted the unrest solely in terms of a shortage of bread. For this reason he considered it advisable to issue the following statement throughout the city:

For the past days the distribution of flour to bakeries for the purpose of production of bread in Petrograd has been at the normal level. There should not be any shortage of bread for sale. If in some stores bread is lacking, it is because many who are afraid of shortage of bread have bought it for stock. Rye flour is sufficiently stocked in Petrograd. Supply of this flour comes in without interruption.⁴⁹

The proclamation was far from true. Immediately after it was printed in the major newspapers on the following day, the delegates of the Petrograd bakers' union visited Khabalov, complaining that the flour they obtained amounted to a mere 3,000 puds, whereas they needed 5,000 puds to maintain sufficient production. Khabalov replied that under the circumstances it would be impossible to appropriate the amount of flour requested by the bakers.⁵⁰ Although aware of the untruth of the proclamation, Khabalov was in no position to admit a shortage of bread in the capital to the populace. The problem of the proclamation was that it was not accompanied by more energetic, concrete efforts by the government to make more bread available to the populace, even by exhausting the reserves in the city and diverting the portions earmarked for the military. Unaccompanied by such concrete measures, the proclamation not only left the stomachs of the demonstrators empty, but, even worse, it fanned their anger.

As on the previous night, Khabalov called for a strategic meeting in the office of the *gradonachal'stvo*. Members of the general staff raised the question of the Cossacks' reliability, some even proposing the transfer of undesirable elements to Finland and their replacement by more reliable Cossack units from Krasnoe Selo and Novgorod. Colonel Pavlenkov, however, considered such action premature. The conferees decided: (1) to tighten the supervision of bakeries so as to assure that all the flour given to them would actually be baked into bread and sold to the populace; (2) to arrest the revolutionaries who

48 Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, p. 164; Akaemov 1917, pp. xiv, xvi; Martynov 1927, p. 74.

49 Document 7, Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, p. 2.

50 Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1, pp. 184–5.

were instigating the disturbances; and (3) to strengthen the composition of the cavalry units by bringing in a battalion of guard regiments from Novgorod.⁵¹ Nothing was changed in the basic orientation of the previous policy. From these decisions one can hardly detect a sense of urgency. They met with this crisis in the same lethargic manner as they had met others. E.I. Martynov summarises the weaknesses of the authorities as follows:

The first two days revealed to an utmost degree the weakness of the government to which large troops were available. It failed to bring them into action, judging that only the police were enough to suppress the disturbances, though it was obviously not enough to cope with the movement. It is true that the troops in the Petrograd Garrison were from the government's point of view not especially reliable. Nonetheless, in order to save the existing regime, they should have had no moment of delay, for as a result of the propaganda that had been mounted, each additional day would make these troops more unreliable.⁵²

Few predicted that the strike movement that had begun in Petrograd would ultimately lead to a revolution, but many felt as early as the second day that an unusual political crisis had arrived. The number of strike participants was greater than any other previous strike during the war, and workers succeeded in staging demonstrations and holding mass political rallies on Nevskii for the first time since 1905. Demonstrations had become more violent, involving many assaults on policemen. Cossacks and soldiers reacted to the demonstrators sympathetically. All the revolutionary underground parties were united in their support of the strike and demonstration for the ultimate purpose of overthrowing the tsarist regime. In the face of this crisis, the Duma liberals finally gained a concession from the government concerning the jurisdiction of the food supply in Petrograd. But this concession was as irrelevant as Khabalov's proclamation, since the movement that developed in the streets was not merely a bread riot. It was directed against the regime itself.

51 Akaemov 1917, p. xvi; Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie* 1924, vol. 1, pp. 188–9; Martynov 1927, pp. 74–5.

52 Martynov 1927, p. 76.

The General Strike: February 25

The Vyborg District Leads the General Strikes

The battle was resumed early in the morning. A general strike had begun, spreading now to the workers who had stood aloof during the past two days. Middle-class elements such as students, white-collar workers, and teachers now joined the workers' demonstration. More than 200,000 factory workers joined the general strike and more than 173 factories were struck.¹ Petrograd was threatened with paralysis. Newspapers ceased publication; trams and cabs were nowhere in sight; and many stores, restaurants, and banks closed their doors. When *Gradonachal'nik* Balk noted that the movement 'bore the character of an uprising', he was not exaggerating, for on numerous occasions Cossacks and soldiers began to support the demonstrators against the police, while the strike organisers began to coalesce into a single united centre.²

This day also the movement followed the established pattern of strike and demonstration, but on a larger scale and with increasing effectiveness. The workers went to the factories, not to work but to attend political meetings. Orators with varying political opinions rose at the rallies, appealing for the overthrow of tsarism. The slogan 'Bread' now became of secondary importance.

The Vyborg District continued to lead.³ Large factories provided the major meeting places that held thousands of workers, with orators of different ideological persuasions all advocating radical actions. An Okhrana spy, Limonin' (Bolshevik Shurkanov) noted that factories were turned into 'grandiose' clubs. Experienced orators electrified the workers and attempted to coordinate actions for strikes and demonstrations.⁴ At New Parvianen more than 5,000 workers assembled at the mining workshop, where the Bolshevik, Menshevik-Internationalist, and SR orators appealed to fight against the war and tsarism. Denouncing the war and tsarist oppression, they shouted: 'We cannot live like

1 The figure of the Okhrana report is 210,248; that of the *gradonachl'stvo*, 240,000; Leiberov gives 300,000. See Akaemov 1917, p. xiii; Document 9, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 37–41; Martynov 1927, p. 76; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 143; Leiberov 1966, p. 32. For the most recent accounts on the events on February Revolution, Ganelin 2014c, pp. 100–20.

2 Balk 1929, p. 5a.

3 Melancon 2000, p. 19.

4 *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, p. 174.

this any longer. We are human beings, not animals'. The masses of workers went out of the factory gates toward the Sampsonievskii Prospekt.⁵

The meeting in Aivaz Factory, attended by 4,000 workers, adopted a resolution calling for continuing the strike until 1 March, and for 'peaceful demonstration' on Nevskii. Here, too, the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks, and the SRS collaborated. At Rozenkrantz, where more than 3,000 workers assembled at the meeting, the situation was slightly different. According to S.S. Lobov, the Bolshevik leader at Rozenkrantz, the main tribune was monopolised by the Bolsheviks and a few anarchists, barring the speeches of the SRS and Mensheviks.⁶ Mass meetings were held also in Phoenix, New Lessner, Promet and other factories.⁷

A Bolshevik worker, Kaiurov, acquired two pieces of red cloth on which he boldly wrote: 'Down with Autocracy' and 'Down with the War'.⁸ A young student of the Psychoneurological Institute, R. Kovnator, who belonged to the Mezhraiontsy, was awakened at eight o'clock in the morning. On the previous night the Mezhraiontsy were instructed to go to the street to join the demonstration and it was Kovnator's responsibility to make a red banner. But it was difficult to find a large piece of red cloth, particularly without a single kopek in his pocket. Finally he went to his girlfriend and expropriated a red skirt. He made two banners out of it, sewing on them: 'Down with Autocracy', and 'Down with War. Long Live Revolution'.⁹ This day red banners with such radical demands would fill Nevski Prospekt.

Their two days' experience, particularly the sharp pain from the blows of the nagaika, had taught the workers a lesson. They were prepared for the police, and wore heavy coats, sheepskin coats, heavy boots, and put on their shoulders and backs pads made of cotton, wool sweaters, towels and underwear. They cut a piece of metal on a lathe to fit their heads, and wore it under their hats. Before their departure they filled their pockets with such 'weapons' as nuts, bolts, screws, pieces of metals, and whatever they could find in the factory. During the night sharp nails were scattered in strategic positions to counter attacks by

5 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 80-1; Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 117; Kondrat'ev 1923, p. 64; Leiberov 1979, p. 159.

6 Lobov/Gavrilov 1926, p. 137, quoted in Leiberov 1979, p. 160. If this account is correct, Rozenkrantz was an exception. But this memoir material, published in the 1920s, may contain falsification to stress the role of the Bolshevik party. In other factories, the left socialists – Bolsheviks, Menshevik-Internationalists, and SR-Internationalists – collaborated.

7 Leiberov 1979, p. 160.

8 Kaiurov 1923, p. 162.

9 Kovnator 1924, p. 188.

the mounted police. Many workers carried knives and pieces of broken bottles for the purpose of stabbing the horses. Factory committees were formed in New Lessner, Old Lessner, and Promet, the three factories that provided the driving force of the strike movement during the February Revolution. In at least three factories in Vyborg District – Aivaz, Erikson and Old Parviainen – workers' fighting detachments were formed, with some obtaining firearms.¹⁰

The demonstrators moved toward Liteinyi Bridge from all directions. As on the previous day many crossed the river on the ice. But this day the confrontation on the bridge bore a different character. As the demonstrators approached the bridge, the police chief, Colonel Shalfeev, leading a platoon of mounted police and with his nagaika held high, charged headlong into the crowd. The veteran demonstrators who had suffered repeated humiliation from the whips of Shalfeev during the past two days were waiting for this. The crowd ran to the sides, making a wide opening in the middle. But no sooner had Shalfeev galloped through this path than they closed it after him, blocking the platoon of police and isolating Shalfeev in their midst. The chief of police tried to force his way out, desperately swinging his nagaika, but the demonstrators swarmed around him, pushed him off his horse, and seized both his nagaika and sabre. One of the workers, taking a large piece of wood from a nearby cabman's coach, began to pound on the victim, while another, taking Shalfeev's revolver, shot him in the heart. During this melee, the Cossacks 'retreated and left the chief of police lying on the bridge'.¹¹ Immediately after this incident a large number of demonstrators were able to cross the bridge without much difficulty.

In the Vyborg District, the outnumbered police became the targets of the demonstrators' vicious attacks. First, the demonstrators wiped out sentinel posts, taking away their sabres and revolvers. Emboldened, they attacked the police stations on Tikhvenskaia Street and the Sampsonievskii Prospekt. By evening the telephone connections between the *gradonachal'stvo* and the police stations in Vyborg District were cut off. Many police officers could escape only by disguising themselves as soldiers. The workers had already created a 'liberated section' on 25 February.¹² By evening the Vyborg workers erected barricades, made of tram wagons, telephone poles and other objects.¹³ Accord-

10 Based on Leiberov's personal interviews with the participants in the February Revolution. Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, pp. 158–9, 162–3; Leiberov 1979, p. 161, 163.

11 GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, l. 11; Kondrat'ev 1923, p. 64; Document 9, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 34.

12 GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, l. 12; Akaemov 1917, p. xix; Leiberov 1966, pp. 37–38; Leiberov 1979, pp. 162–3.

13 Leiberov 1979, p. 163.

ing to Leiberov, in the Vyborg District 97,700 workers struck, 14 factory meetings were held with 28,200 participants, 9 mass demonstrations with 48,000 demonstrators were organised, and 16 clashes with the police were reported, of which 7 were armed clashes. Eight policemen and thirty demonstrators were wounded. But only seven were arrested. The amazingly small number of the arrested in contrast to the magnitude of strikes and demonstrations indicated the paralysis of the police in this district.¹⁴

Strikes Spread in the Petrograd District and Vasil'evskii Island

In the Petrograd District, the Petrograd Machine Factory, Vulkan, on the west side and the Diuflon Factory on the east represented the two important gathering points for all the workers. About five thousand workers proceeded on Bol'shaia Spasskaia Street toward Bol'shoi Prospekt only to be dispersed by the police. The crowds assembled in the Diuflon Factory moved on Kamennoostrovskii Prospekt toward Troitskii Bridge. The police with the assistance of the soldiers of the Grenadier Regiment drove the crowds from the bridge, but they were powerless to prevent the demonstrators from crossing the river on the ice. The demonstrators attacked a bakery and candy store on Kamennoostrovskii Prospekt.¹⁵ In the Petrograd Side five massive demonstrations were staged with 11,000 participants, and three confrontations with the police occurred.¹⁶

On Vasil'evskii Island the Baltic Shipyard on the south end and the Siemens-Galiske Factory on the north became the gathering centres. From these two points the workers moved toward Bol'shoi Prospekt. Crowds surrounded Petrograd Pipe Factory, the largest factory on the island and the stronghold of the Workers' Group, which had stayed out of the strike for the past two days. Some workers who resisted joining the strike barricaded themselves in workshops. While demonstrators outside were trying to break into the factory, a violent battle was waged inside between the strikers and anti-strikers. Some of the anti-strikers were seriously wounded.¹⁷ The director of the factory called for a company of the Finland Regiment. When a company of the reserve battalion under the command of Second Lieutenant Iossa [or Essa] arrived at the scene, one of the workers, a certain Dmitr'ev [or Kuz'min], began harassing

14 Leiberov 1979, p. 163.

15 Leiberov 1966, p. 38; Document 9, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 35.

16 Leiberov 1979, p. 165.

17 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 171.

the commander, shouting obscenities. The young commander pulled his gun and shot the young worker without warning. The news of this killing spread quickly, inciting the workers of the Petrograd Pipe Factory to burst angrily into the streets. This also caused an indignant reaction among the soldiers in the barracks of the Finland Regiment, who discussed the incident and swore never to fire upon the demonstrators.¹⁸

The demonstrators moving along Srednyi Prospekt stopped at the Laferm tobacco factory. About fifty demonstrators broke into the factory, turned off the electricity, smashed lamps, stopped machines and threw protesting foremen into the streets. The demonstrators on Vasil'evskii Island moved on toward Nikolaevskii Bridge, which was guarded by a platoon of the Fourth Don Cossack Regiment. As the crowds approached the bridge, the platoon sergeant remained inactive, indifferently observing the marching crowds. The angered commander of Vasil'evskii Island, Colonel Khodnev, shouted at the Cossacks to charge into the demonstrators. The Cossacks moved forward slowly, but instead of chasing the demonstrators away they quietly let them cross the bridge.¹⁹

Strikers Spread to Other Districts in the City and Outskirts

In the Nevskii District, the gigantic plant Obukhov struck. In this factory the Mensheviks and the SRs controlled the strike and demonstration. The striking workers marched along Shlissel'burg Prospekt, removing workers from Atlas and the Farforovskii Factory. The demonstrators numbering 17,000 stopped the railways.²⁰ In Okhta, the gigantic Gun Powder Factory joined the strike with the slogan, 'Bread, Freedom, and Peace'. In this factory a left bloc consisting of the Bolsheviks, Menshevik Internationalists, SR-internationalists and anarchists led the movement.²¹

Strikes spread to the Moscow District as well, where Skorokhod, Westinghouse, and other factories struck, and marched along Zabalkanskii Prospekt toward the centre of the city. Students of the Technological Institute and the tram workers also joined the demonstration.²² For the first time since the

18 'Vystuplenie leib-gvardii Finliandskogo zapasnogo polka', *Pravda*, 11 April 1917; Leiberov 1979, pp. 165–6; Document 9, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 35, 36.

19 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 172; Leiberov 1979, p. 167; RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 105; Khodnev 1997, p. 267.

20 Leiberov 1979, pp. 168–9; Document 9, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 35.

21 Leiberov 1979, pp. 169–70.

22 Leiberov, 1979, p. 170.

beginning of the movement on 23 February, Putilov workers joined the movement. Together with workers of nearby factories, they staged a mass demonstration along Petergof Chaussee, recaptured the factory that had been locked up, and formed a factory committee. The workers' factory committee created a fighting detachment to disarm the police and to maintain order in the district.²³

Like an avalanche, the workers' movement engulfed other classes of society. The strike spread to the most unorganised sector of the working class – the workers of small factories and workshops, store clerks, waiters and waitresses, cooks and cabdrivers. An Okhrana agent reported the conversation of the cabdrivers: 'Tomorrow the cabbies will not take the general public, but only the leaders of the disorders.'²⁴ The usually more conservative city employees – workers of the electric power stations, water and gas employees, postal workers and the tram drivers and conductors – joined the strike, contributing to the city's paralysis. Printers also struck, stopping the publication of all newspapers in Petrograd. University professors found few students in their classrooms. The students of Petrograd University, the Polytechnical Institute, the Mining Institute, the Psychoneurological Institute, the Technological Institute, Bestuzhev Women's College and other smaller colleges did not go to classes, and instead attended the political rallies held on their campuses. According to one figure, 15,000 students joined the strike.²⁵

Demonstrators on Nevskii and the Cossacks Attack the Police

The common working men and women, clothed in greasy, worn-out jackets and overcoats, invaded Nevskii. Among the workers' blue-visor caps and the scarves of women, one could see here and there the green and the light blue of students' caps. The crowds continuously sang revolutionary songs – *La Marseillaise*, *Varshavianka*, and *Boldly, Comrades, Keep Pace* – songs they had had to sing clandestinely only a few days before. Songs, shouts of slogans and leaders' short speeches created a constant buzzing echo on the long stretch of Nevskii. On the balconies of the buildings 'burzhui ladies' waved handkerchiefs at the demonstrators. Kovnator unfurled the red banners made out of his girlfriend's skirt; excited cheers rose from the demonstrators. At least fifteen columns of

23 Leiberov 1963, p. 39.

24 GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, l. 11.

25 Leiberov 1963, p. 41; Baranovskaia 1968, p. 20.

demonstrators marched on Nevskii this day. They held at least four rallies there, each attended by more than a thousand people.²⁶

The aggressiveness of the demonstrators had sharply increased. Armed with whatever was available – rocks, broken bottles and sharp pieces of ice, as well as bolts, nuts and sharp parts of instruments concealed under their coats and hats – they attacked the police sentinel posts. Occasionally revolver shots were fired at the police. As the number of arrests grew, it became increasingly difficult for the police to transfer those arrested to proper detention facilities. In many cases, the police temporarily detained those arrested in nearby houses appropriated for this purpose. Number 46 on the Nevskii, for instance, was converted into a prison, where about sixty arrested persons were held. Demonstrators gathered in front of the building, demanding the release of the prisoners. When the police guard refused, demonstrators broke into the house, setting all the prisoners free.²⁷ Cossacks stationed nearby refused to come to rescue the police on the grounds that the house was located beyond their assigned territory.

About 6 p.m., on Nevskii between Anichkov Bridge and Liteinyi Prospekt, a hand grenade exploded, killing a mounted gendarme and injuring his horse. Two home-made bombs were thrown at the corner of Liteinyi and Nevskii. One of the demonstrators shot a policeman at the intersection of Nevskii and Vladimir Prospekts, but escaped arrest. Although Khabalov refused to grant permission to use firearms, some policemen had to use their revolvers in self-defence. On this day alone there occurred seventeen serious clashes between the police and the demonstrators.²⁸

The crowds acted more boldly as they became assured that the soldiers would not interfere. They surrounded the patrols and the sentinels and appealed to the soldiers: 'Tell your comrades to support us, not to go against us'. Some soldiers approvingly nodded their heads. On Nevskii Prospekt, demon-

26 Kondrat'ev 1923, pp. 65–6; Kovnator 1924, p. 189; Leiberov 1966, p. 42.

27 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 94–5; Document 9, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 36.

28 *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 5; *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, p. 169; p. 169; RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 157; Document 9, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 36. According to Leiberov, among these seventeen incidents there were eleven in which demonstrators used weapons (seven cases involving revolvers, three of bombs, one of a hand grenade, and six of rocks, screws and pieces of metal and ice). From these figures Leiberov concludes that the proletariat of Petrograd 'transformed the peaceful struggle into an armed uprising on 25 February'. However, as Burdzhakov argues, it would be rash to view the whole movement as an armed uprising on the basis of these isolated incidents. Leiberov 1966, pp. 42–3; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 152.

strators temporarily stopped marching, when they saw the Cossacks in front blocking their way. A girl walked out of the ranks of the demonstration and moved forward toward the Cossacks. A thousand eyes followed her. Suddenly she thrust away a wrapping paper and held out a bouquet of red roses to the officer, who leaned over and took the flowers. Mad, riotous shouts of hurrah were sounded.²⁹

Both Cossacks and soldiers executed orders reluctantly. Colonel Khodnev, commander of the training detachment of the Finland Regiment, complained about the conduct of the Cossacks:

The Don Cossacks acted with utmost inertia and irresolution. They blatantly refused to take action against the rebels; they even pointed their weapons at the defenders of the legitimate government ... More than once I heard them say threateningly: 'It is not 1905 now ... We will not act against ourselves and against the people'.³⁰

In some cases they expressed their sympathy with the demonstrators by direct action. At House Number 3 Kazan Street, about two dozen arrested demonstrators were detained under the surveillance of two policemen. At about 2 p.m., as demonstrators gathered in front of the house demanding the release of their comrades, a platoon of Cossacks arrived at Kazan Square. Despite the request of the police, however, the Cossacks did nothing to disperse the crowds, insisting that their assignment did not include the protection of the prison. The cheering crowds surrounding the Cossacks appealed: 'Comrade Cossacks, join us. Help us to liberate our comrades!' The Cossacks assembled in a circle for discussion. All the eyes of the demonstrators were anxiously fixed on them. Suddenly the Cossacks galloped to the door of the house, chasing the guards away with shouts: 'You bastards! You are serving only for money'. The Cossacks opened the door and released all the prisoners.³¹

Police Commander Krylov Killed on Znamenskaia Square

The most symbolic incident occurred in Znamenskaia Square. According to one version, thousands of demonstrators filled the square between the statue of

²⁹ *Pravda*, March 12, 1919, quoted in Burdzhakov 1967, p. 148; Tarasov-Rodionov 1931, pp. 46–7.

³⁰ Quoted in Burdzhakov 1967, p. 149; 'Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia' 1918, p. 169.

³¹ Shepelev 1927; Akaemov 1917, pp. xix–xx; Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 111.

Alexander III and Nikolaevskii Station. Orator after orator delivered passionate speeches, some against the war, others calling for support of the Duma and the establishment of a responsible ministry, while the Cossacks watched the rally indifferently. About three o'clock in the afternoon a platoon of mounted police led by an officer, Krylov, arrived at the scene. At Krylov's shrill command, police charged the crowds, who in panic ran in all directions. Krylov, leading the attack, snatched a red banner from fleeing demonstrators and tore it in contempt.

Some workers, caps in hands, approached the Cossacks and humbly pleaded for assistance: 'Cossack brothers, help the workers in their struggle for peaceful demands. You see how the Pharaohs are treating us hungry workers. Help us!' The Cossacks exchanged glances in embarrassment. Next moment, they rushed into the crowds with unsheathed sabres. It first occurred to Kaiurov that they were hurrying to help the police, but instead they were attacking the police. The mounted police galloped away in fright. The crowds ran back to join in the attack. After the tumultuous melee, the Cossacks returned to their former position as if nothing had happened. But lying on the snow in the square were the bleeding remains of Krylov. It is impossible to determine who dealt the fatal blow, the Cossacks or the demonstrators. An examination of the body, ordered by Khabalov, showed wounds caused by both sabres and revolver shots.³² According to another version, Krylov ordered the Cossacks to fire upon the crowds. When this order was ignored, the angered police chief swung his arm and slapped a Cossack on his cheek. At this instant, a Cossack junior officer, M.G. Filatov, a recipient of the order of St. George, who was mounting his horse next to the struck Cossack, unsheathed his sober and struck Krylov's head a violent blow.³³ Whichever version was correct, this incident reinforced the optimism of the insurgents that the soldiers would take their side.

After the incident on Znamenskaia Square, the crowds went to Kazan Square. Driven away from there, they again moved back on Nevskii toward Znamenskaia Square, but this time armed soldiers of the Ninth Cavalry Regiment lined up in Nevskii and the side streets, blocking the path of the demonstrators. Particularly heavy ranks were formed across Sadovaia Street near the

32 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, ll. 83, 89; Kaiurov 1923, pp. 162–3; Martynov 1927, p. 79; Akaemov 1917, p. xxi. It is interesting to note that Globachev's report to Protopopov omitted any reference to this event. See Document 9, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 36. On the whole Globachev's report gives the impression that the police and Cossacks were successfully dispersing the demonstrators.

33 Efremov 1926, p. 218.

Gostinyi Dvor. The demonstrators, convinced that the soldiers would not shoot, marched triumphantly. Finally, the first rank of the demonstration stopped as the soldiers pointed their bayonets at their chests. The crowds at the back, still singing revolutionary songs, continued to move forward. In the confusion at the front, women screamed tearfully: 'Comrades, put down your bayonets. Join us'. The soldiers, confused, threw quick glances at each other. Then, lifting their rifles to their shoulders, slipped in among the demonstrators. Thunderous cheers greeted the soldiers, whose grey overcoats were submerged in the sea of demonstrators. Securely protected, the first soldiers to abandon their posts marched with the workers.³⁴

These isolated incidents indicated that the situation was moving rapidly toward a climax. As the confrontation intensified, it became more difficult for soldiers to maintain neutrality. In a dilemma between increasingly rigorous orders from above and persuasive pleas from the demonstrators, tension among the soldiers mounted to a breaking point. But how many would have the courage to defy their military orders? While scattered incidents showed that some soldiers helped the demonstrators, others had now begun to obey orders to shoot at the crowds.

Two platoons of a training detachment blocked Nevskii near the city duma, forming lines across the street on the bridge over the Ekaterininskii Canal. Kaiurov, Aleksandrovich, and other leaders ran ahead of the demonstration to test the sentiments of these soldiers. Having tried in vain to convince the soldiers not to shoot, they withdrew to the side, while the demonstrators approached the soldiers to a distance of no more than fifty steps. Suddenly, an officer gave the signal. The soldiers fired one volley, another, and a third. Standing near the soldiers, Kaiurov followed the direction of the rifles. They shot into the sky. The crowd hit the dirt, but realising what happened, they got up with cheers. But the next moment, another volley was fired, this time into the crowd. The panic-stricken demonstrators ran to the sides, with screams of hysteria, leaving the bleeding and moaning victims on the street. Nine were killed, nine wounded.³⁵

Another shooting incident took place on Nevskii near the Gostinyi Dvor. A company of the Ninth Cavalry Regiment on guard ordered the demonstrators to disperse with a threat of shooting. As if answering this warning, some in the crowds fired several revolver shots at the soldiers, severely wounding one private. Immediately a platoon of dragoons dismounted and opened fire, killing

34 Baranovskaia 1968, p. 22; Kaiurov 1923, p. 163.

35 Kaiurov 1923, p. 164; Burdzhilov 1967, p. 148.

three demonstrators and wounding ten others.³⁶ They brought the victims inside the city duma. Skobelev saw there two dead bodies and six to seven wounded.³⁷

The State Duma Debates the Food Supply Question

A Kadet A.B. Tyrkova-Williams had breakfast at a restaurant in the Tauride Palace with Shingarev, Stepanov, Miliukov and Rodichev. They discussed whether the movement in the streets constituted a revolution or simple street disturbances. Usually talkative, Rodichev remained silent, only listening to the opinion of others, but quietly said: 'If this is a revolution, the tsar's head will roll'.³⁸

While the crowds were occupying the streets, the Duma engaged in a debate on the food shortage. Its irrelevance was obvious even in the eyes of the Duma deputies themselves. Rittikh assured that there was enough flour to feed the Petrograd population for two weeks, and that the crisis was caused by false rumours. He then solemnly announced that the government had decided to transfer food distribution matters to the jurisdiction of the city duma. This was an important concession on the government's part, virtually overruling Protopopov's policy, and extending an olive branch to the liberal opposition. The Duma deputies, however, took this as an affront rather than the government's sincere gesture for reconciliation with society. Shingarev was quick to point out that the government had made this compromise under the pressure of the current crisis only to withdraw the concession when the crisis was over. Shingarev warned that it would not be society but the government that would have to assume responsibility for what might happen in the streets. At the end of his speech, however, he attached two conditions to accept Rittikh's proposal: government's guarantee to assure proper functions of the city administrations and its guarantee of proper delivery of bread. After all, Shingarev accepted Rittikh's olive branch conditionally. Progressist deputy V.A. Rzhevskii proposed to extend a similar transfer of power to all self-governments and asked the government to enact an emergency law to make this possible.³⁹

36 Telegram of Khabalov to Alekseev, no. 3703, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 5; Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie* 1924, vol. 1, pp. 189–90. According to Balk, four were killed and twelve wounded. Balk (Hoover) 1929, p. 5a.

37 Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 171.

38 Quoted in Arkhipov 2000, pp. 81–2.

39 *Stenograficheskii otchet* 1917, pp. 1745–6, 1749–52; Document 10, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*, pp. 42–9.

Rejecting this compromise, Kerenskii urged his colleagues to adopt a motion to dismiss the present cabinet, form 'a government that would subordinate itself to the control of the entire people', guarantee the freedom of speech, assembly, organisation, and personal inviolability, and place the food supply in the hands of the populace. Opposing this motion, Chkheidze went even farther and declared that any proclamation addressed to the government would create an illusion among the populace that it would still be possible to solve the crisis within the existing political system.⁴⁰ Rodzianko, however, ruled Kerenskii's motion out of order, and adjourned the Duma meeting quickly till 11 a.m. Tuesday, 28 February.⁴¹ When the workers were taking to the streets, and being killed, the Duma decided to disperse, and not to meet until Tuesday on the following week.

It is important to note the change in tone in Kerenskii's and Chkheidze's speeches. The Duma Trudoviks and Mensheviks were taking a decisive step to support the strike and demonstrations in the streets, with a view to bringing pressure to bear on the liberals. Both were advocating the overthrow of the tsarist government, a call for a revolution which they were urging the Duma liberals to join. The socialists' pressure was not entirely without any influence on the Duma liberals. The Kadets held a meeting, and decided to petition to the Duma Presidium to reschedule the Duma session on 28 February so that the Duma could discuss a 'firm and decisive formula of transition [of power]'. Clearly, the Kadets were moving in a radical direction to demand the formation of a responsible government or a ministry of confidence.⁴²

The Duma cut the debate short – it lasted only 49 minutes. Chkheidze and Kerenskii made a motion to hold the Duma session on Monday, 27 February rather than on Tuesday, as planned. But this motion was defeated. No one knew that this was the last official session of the Fourth Duma.⁴³

The City Duma Debate Support for the Revolution

The city duma, to which the entire responsibility of the food supply in Petrograd was suddenly entrusted by the government, had an emergency meeting in the evening. Since the city duma was located by Ekaterininskii Canal on Nevskii, the centre of the demonstrations, this meeting, attended not only

40 Stenograficheskii otchet 1917, pp. 1756–58; Document 10, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*, pp. 50–1.

41 Stenograficheskii otchet 1917, p. 1758; Document 10, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*, p. 51.

42 Lyandres 1997, p. 118.

43 Startsev 1980, pp. 14–15.

by the city дума deputies, but also by the representatives of various public [obshchestvennye] and workers' organisations, could not but bear a political character.

The first speaker, Senator S.V. Ivanov, stated that the meeting should not and could not be restricted to the discussion of food distribution in view of the crisis developing in the streets. After listening to city mayor Lelianov's report on the government's decision to transfer the task of food distribution to the city дума, Ivanov further remarked that despite the demand made a long time before by the city, the government did not respond until it was forced by this serious crisis. A city дума deputy, Major-General P.P. Durnovo, expressed scepticism about the possibility of improving the food situation in Petrograd by transferring jurisdiction to the city government. In his opinion, unless the government promised to assure fifty wagons of flour rather than twenty-seven, the city дума should not take the task upon itself and should inform the populace of the reality of the situation. M.S. Margulies reported that the city health department had begun to organise district food committees. However, these committees were running into difficulties since they could not establish contact with the workers due to the minister of internal affairs' prohibition on including workers' delegates in the committees. Because of this the health department in the Vyborg District refused to cooperate, protesting against the exclusion. Deputy O.I. Chistiakov proposed that the Duma's resolution should be implemented comprehensively at the district level without prior government approval. Shingarev endorsed this opinion, insisting that the workers should be represented in these organisations and that the government had no right to intervene in this process. He added that the workers' representation should not serve as a bait so that the government would arrest them, as had happened in the Workers' Group in the Central War Industries Committee. Only with these guarantees could the city дума fulfil the task it was charged with by the government. Deputy A.I. Shintinikov indicted the current government as being 'completely incompetent' and that therefore 'it must go and give way to a coalition government'. This statement was received with thunderous applause.⁴⁴

An Okhrana agent remarked that 'after the recess the meeting began to bear a completely revolutionary character'. A man named Kagan informed the participants of the shooting on Nevskii. The chairman of the Petrograd Union of Workers' Cooperatives, I.G. Volkov, asked the participants to stand up in memory of those workers who had fallen by the bullets. Everyone stood up. Then Volkov boldly declared that the solution to the food crisis would be pos-

44 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 329–31; Document 11, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 52–3.

sible only under a democratic state order, and demanded not only the resignation of the government but also a fundamental change in the state structure. He suggested that the election to the food supply organisations would take place on Monday.⁴⁵ This suggestion was interesting with respect to the future formation of the Petrograd Soviet, indicating that election campaigns had been prepared among the workers, whether they were for the food supply organisations or for the Petrograd Soviet. Then in response to Shingarev, Volkov declared that the workers needed no guarantees from the government, since they did not believe in their empty promise at all. A worker named Savel'ev endorsed Volkov's view, saying that the workers were not granted any rights and had no voice, and were driven into a blind alley. 'We do not believe the "supreme power" [tsarist government]', he continued, 'since it is carrying out an internecine war and pushing us into hunger'.⁴⁶ The exchange between Shingarev and the workers like Volkov and Savel'ev concealed the future disagreement between the liberals and the workers.

Not only the workers' representative, but also the Kadet liberal, Kogan, demanded a revolution. He stated that it was time not to talk about the food supply problem, but to think about the revolution that had started as an established fact and to do everything to lead it before other irresponsible elements assumed leadership.⁴⁷

The appearance of Kerenskii further added to the excitement. Kerenskii spoke about the duplicity of the government, which wanted to transfer the task of the food supply to the city duma, only when it found it impossible to solve it by itself. He introduced a resolution to demand that the government should not interfere in the actions of society and the workers for solving this crisis. He brought the news that the police had just arrested all the participants in a public meeting of the Workers' Group of the War Industries Committee. The agitated audience burst into angry shouts and unanimously decided to send the mayor of the city, Lelianov, and the State Duma deputy, Shingarev, to the government to secure the release of the arrested workers. State Duma deputy Skobelev stated that the government was attempting to solve the food supply crisis by shooting those who had nothing to eat. This treachery should be widely broadcast, since the act demanded reprisals. According to this Menshevik orator, the people should take advantage of the government's confusion and act

45 Shliapnikov 1923c, vol. 1, p. 332; Document 11, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 53–4.

46 Shliapnikov 1923c, vol. 1, p. 332.; Document 11, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 54.

47 Quoted in Aleksandrov 1963, p. 126. Aleksandrov was a Bolshevik worker of the Putilov Factory.

decisively. A worker of the New Lessner Factory, Samodyrov, protested against the arrest of the workers 'in the name of the workers of all Russia', saying, 'The trouble does not lie in the Protopopovs, but in the system itself. We would not change a thing if we patched up the existing state system; we must destroy it from its foundations'. City Duma deputy V.V. Markozov appealed to the workers not to go out in the streets to repeat the tragedy of the 1905 Revolution, but to this Samodyrov responded that the workers would have to go out into the streets to protest the arrest of their comrades.⁴⁸

The workers' movement thus induced the liberals to sharpen their criticism of the government. Some even openly advocated revolution. There was no question in their minds that the crowds went to the streets with a righteous cause and that the government was ultimately responsible for the crisis. Yet it became increasingly clear that the liberals had no control over these unruly demonstrators. Their passionate speeches in the city duma as well as in the State Duma indicated that the strikes, demonstrations, and violence in the streets were beginning to affect the liberals, but their voices remained ineffective in influencing the masses and unheeded by the government. Moreover, despite strong words uttered from the rostrum, few believed that the crisis was truly serious enough to become a revolution. Both the State and the city dumas decided not to hold a meeting on the following day. Sunday would be a day of rest, not a day for a revolution.

The Bolsheviks are Divided on Tactics

The rapidly developing events in the city had a deep impact on the activities of the revolutionary leaders. The activists keenly felt the need to establish a centre for the movement to coordinate activities, and a proposal to set up an organisation similar to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies in 1905 was widely discussed among various activist circles.⁴⁹

As the street fighting became more intense, estrangement between the Bolshevik Russian Bureau of the Central Committee and the lower echelons of the party deepened. Some members of the Vyborg District Committee now openly advocated an armed uprising, urging the Russian Bureau to issue a manifesto calling for an insurrection. In the morning Sveshnikov called on Shliapnikov. According to this member of the Vyborg District Committee,

48 Shliapnikov 1923c, vol. 1, pp. 333–4; Document 11, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 53–4.

49 See Chapter 17.

Shliapnikov's mood and his account of the developing events surprised me a little. When I referred to the events in the city as a revolution that had begun, Shliapnikov said: 'What revolution is happening there?! Give the workers a loaf of bread, and the movement would be gone'.

Needless to say, the Vyborg District Committee was outraged by this statement. Some now argued that they should take the initiative and make the manifesto by themselves.⁵⁰ Categorically rejecting the Vyborg Committee's recommendation, Shliapnikov adopted a draft leaflet with milder content, which, in spite of all the diatribes against the war, tsarism, and the bourgeoisie, failed to mention a concrete proposal for action. The leaflet stated that to end the war the proletariat should overthrow not only the government but also the bourgeoisie represented by the Duma as well as the nobility represented by the zemstvos. They had one line with reference to direct action – 'All to the struggle. To the streets! For yourself, for your children, and for your brothers'. Those Vyborg activists who had demanded endorsement of the policy of an armed uprising were deeply disappointed with this leaflet.⁵¹ They again turned to Shliapnikov, begging him to grant permission to seize arms. Some, like Chugurin, led a workers' fighting detachment to attack the police headquarters to seize weapons, without permission of the Russian Bureau.

Shliapnikov, however, stubbornly rejected such a request. In his opinion, such adventurism would hinder the cause of revolution.

I feared that the reckless policy of obtaining weapons in such a manner could do nothing but harm the cause. Excited workers using a revolver against a soldier could only provoke some army units and give an excuse to the soldiers to attack the workers. Therefore, I definitely refused to allow anybody to seek weapons and requested that they try to draw the soldiers into the uprising in a most persuasive way and to obtain weapons in this way for all the workers.⁵²

In the light of what happened two days later, this was perfectly sound judgment. The strike movement had gone as far as it possibly could. The key to

50 Shveshnikov 1923, pp. 83–4. This part was omitted in his previous article in *Petrogradskaia pravda*.

51 Actually, since the Russian Bureau did not have a printing press, this leaflet remained only as a draft, and was never printed or distributed. Melancon 1988, p. 482.

52 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 102–5; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 162.

further development of the revolution, if this movement could be developed into a revolution, would undoubtedly depend on the attitudes of the soldiers. It would have been perfectly proper for Shliapnikov as a responsible revolutionary leader to cool the temper of excited adventurers, who might provoke a reaction, and to put them in line with an 'objectively correct strategy'. But one must remember that Shliapnikov wrote his memoirs from history's vantage point. He knew that the soldiers' insurrection had occurred on 27 February. It is difficult to know if he had held the same opinion on 25 February as he narrated in his memoirs.

Shliapnikov's statement would have been more convincing had it been accompanied by more energetic leadership over the strike and the demonstration. As disgruntled members of the Vyborg District Committee testified, the leadership of the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee left much to be desired. It did not think very highly of the movement. During the past three days, none of the three members of the bureau seems to have physically led or joined the movement. They did not run from one factory to another, calling for strikes, nor did they face rifles pointed directly at them during the demonstration. They did not share the fear and exultation of the street fighting with the actual strike organisers and the demonstration leaders like Kaiurov and Chugurin, or for that matter like Iurenev, the leader of the Mezhraionka, and Aleksandrovich, the left SR, who made fiery speeches at the political rallies and appealed to the soldiers to join the movement. It was likely that Shliapnikov's instructions to draw the soldiers into an uprising without seizing weapons was met with resentment, even with contempt, by those who had risked their lives in the streets.

Those who accurately sensed the pulse of the popular movement were the leaders who actually led the strike and the demonstration in the factories and the streets. Their demand for an armed uprising, adventurous though it might appear, was based on their intuitive observation of the soldiers' psychology. They realised that soldiers 'are all tied together by a compulsory discipline whose threads are held, up to the last moment, in the officer's fist'.⁵³ The experience of 25 February clearly demonstrated that when the officers effectively asserted their leadership, the soldiers would pull the trigger of their rifles at the demonstrators, despite their suppressed sympathy and pangs of conscience. Trotsky best describes the decisive moment when the demonstrators confront the soldiers:

53 Trotsky 1932, vol. 1, p. 121.

The critical hour of contact between the pushing crowd and the soldiers who bar their way has its critical minute. That is when the grey barrier has not yet given way, still holds together shoulder to shoulder, but already wavers, and the officer, gathering his last strength of will, gives the command: 'Fire!' The cry of the crowd, the yells of terror and threat, drowns the command, but not wholly. The rifles waver. The crowd pushes. Then the officer points the barrel of his revolver at the most suspicious soldier. From the decisive minute now stands out the decisive second. The death of the boldest soldier, to whom the others have involuntarily looked for guidance, a shot into the crowd by a corporal from the dead man's rifle, and the barrier closes, the guns go off of themselves, scattering the crowd into the alleys and backyards.⁵⁴

The leaders of the demonstration learned from their experience that to draw the soldiers to their side they should slay the officer before he pulled his trigger. For that reason, they demanded weapons. It was risky; it might provoke a reaction. But they were willing to take that risk.

The Petersburg Committee defiantly adopted a policy contrary to the Russian Bureau's instructions. Ignoring the draft leaflet sent by the Russian Bureau, it decided to issue its own. This leaflet, addressed to 'Brother soldiers', stated: 'On the third day, we, the workers of Petrograd are openly demanding the destruction of the autocratic regime, the perpetrator of spilling the blood of the people, the perpetrator of hunger, who are bringing your wives, children, mothers and brothers to ruin'. It reminded the soldiers that only the fraternal union of the working class and the revolutionary army would be able to liberate the oppressed people and to end this internecine and senseless war, and appealed: 'Down with the tsarist monarchy! Long live the brotherly union of the revolutionary army with the people'.⁵⁵ Also it urged the Bolsheviks to take measures for building barricades in the streets and seizing the electric power station, water supply station and telephone station. Responding to the

54 Ibid. pp. 121–2.

55 Document 13, *Fevra'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 59. According to Melancon, due to the lack of printing press, the Petersburg Committee did not print this leaflet. Melancon 1988, p. 482. The proceedings of this meeting were reported in the police record. See GARF, f. DPOO, op. 5, ch. 57/1917 g., ll. 30–2; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., ll. 42–3. The first one is a handwritten report; the second is a typewritten report that corrected some factual mistakes in the first one. This record is now reproduced in Document 12, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 56–7. Also see Barshtein/ Shalaginova 1962, p. 112.

widespread movement to establish a centre of the movement, the Petersburg Committee decided to create a factory committee in each factory, which would dispatch its delegates to an 'Information Bureau', which in turn would be transformed into a soviet of workers' deputies, in the form of the one created in the 1905 Revolution, at the appropriate moment.⁵⁶ In defiance of the Russian Bureau, the Petersburg Committee considered the transition from general strike to armed uprising the most urgent task at hand.⁵⁷

The Mezhrainontsy, the Left SRs and the Mensheviks

The Mezhrainontsy and the left SRs were more actively engaged in propaganda activities among the workers, but more importantly among the soldiers. On the night of 25 to 26 February the Mezhrainontsy discussed how to have the workers react to Khabalov's order to return to work. The Mezhrainontsy did not question that the workers would not heed Khabalov's proclamation. However, 'considering that the workers' revolutionary movement had not yet reached a decisive moment, at the same time wishing to partake in it, and above all fearing that this would eventually develop into a spontaneous explosion of the unorganised masses', the Mezhrainontsy decided to issue a leaflet appealing to the workers not to obey Khabalov's proclamation. Together with this leaflet,

56 GARF, f. DPOO, op. 5, ch. 57/1917 g., l. 32; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917, l. 42.

57 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 101–2; Listovki 1939, vol. 2, pp. 250–1; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., l. 44; Melancon 1988, p. 482; Document 12, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 56–8. O.A. Shashkova, editor of *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, identifies the 'Information Bureau' in the document as the one organised by Konovalov and Kerenskii. But clearly, the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee meant a separate 'information bureau' as a kernel of a soviet. See *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 31 (endnote 6). The details of the Petersburg Committee's meeting on 25 February are obscure. According to Zalutskii, the Executive Committee of the Petersburg Committee held a meeting at an apartment on Kronverk Street, attended by Skorokhodov, Shutko, Chugurin, Gan'shin, Zalutskii and others. Skorokhodov, Shutko, and Chugurin declared that they decided to halt the workers' demonstration to avoid further bloodshed. Zalutskii explained to them that the military units were wavering and that a revolution would be impossible without blood. To Zalutskii's surprise the participants were persuaded by his argument and adopted a militant resolution calling for intensification of the struggle. Zalutskii himself was entrusted with the task of writing a short leaflet. Zalutskii 1930, p. 37. Zalutskii's account, however, does not correspond with the police record of the Petersburg Committee's meeting or the general mood of the Bolshevik activists on 25 February. The meeting Zalutskii described might have taken place on 26 February.

the Mezhraiontsy issued another leaflet directed to the soldiers, urging them to 'follow the example of the Cossacks at Znamenskaia Square'.⁵⁸

The Menshevik activists and the leaders of the cooperative movement held a meeting that was attended by thirty to fifty delegates from all districts of the city. Chkheidze, F.A. Cherevanin (Menshevik-Defencist), and the two leaders of the cooperative movement, I.G. Volkov and N.Iu. Kapelinskii, also attended. They decided to create a soviet of workers' deputies and instructed the participants to return to their respective organisations to organise elections to the soviet.⁵⁹ Unlike the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee's call for the creation of a soviet to be the agenda for the distant future, this was the first time that the creation of a soviet of workers' deputies was raised as an urgent task of the moment since the strike movement began on 23 February. But, like the Bolshevik colleagues, the Left SR and Mezhraiontsy who attended the meeting opposed the creation of a soviet as still premature.⁶⁰ An Okhrana agent, 'Stepanov', reported that Kerenskii arrived on horseback at the Znamenskaia Square, and in a powerful speech appealed to the crowds to elect the representatives to the soviet of workers' deputies and to organise and arm themselves.⁶¹ Whether Kerenskii actually made an appearance at Znamenskaia Square to deliver a fiery speech is not verified, but it indicates that Kerenskii and his like-minded right socialists had taken a definite stance to support and take the leadership of the movement and took the initiative of calling for the creation of the soviet as the urgent task of the movement.

In the evening, with Guchkov's permission, the two remaining members of the Workers' Group, Ostapenko and Anasovskii, called a meeting of the representatives of the workers' movement in the office of the Central War Industries Committee on Liteinyi, presumably to discuss the food crisis, but obviously intending to discuss broader political questions. Kerenskii, Skobelev and thirty representatives of the workers attended the meeting. But on the grounds that the two members of the Workers' Group on the search warrant were among the participants, the police broke up the meeting and arrested all the participants. Kerenskii and Skobelev were immediately released.⁶²

58 Iurenev 1924, pp. 140–1; Melancon 2000, pp. 21–2.

59 'Kak obrazoval'sia Petrogradskii soviet', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, 27 August 1917; Melancon 2009, p. 8. See Chapter 17.

60 Melancon 1990, p. 254; Melancon 2000, pp. 18, 21.

61 Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, p. 172. The Okhrana agent (B.G.) who compiled the reports stated that this information was likely to be made up.

62 Kulikov 2014a, p. 169.

The Okhrana report also mentioned that the Socialist Revolutionaries had decided to join the movement 'to support the revolutionary offensive of the proletariat', and that the anarchists had also decided to 'take advantage of the moment for their aims ... for terror against the government in the broadest possible ways', including setting bombs in the Okhrana and the provincial gendarme administration.⁶³

Two Important Developments

There were two important developments in the revolutionary parties' response to the general strike on 25 February. First, as Melancon points out, the cooperation among the radical revolutionary activists including the Bolsheviks, Left-SRs, Menshevik-Internationalists, and Mezhrailonsy was strengthened, and a loose coalition of these activists played an important role in the general strike and demonstration. Second, the right wing of socialists, including the socialist Duma deputies such as Kerenskii, Skobelev, and Chkheidze, the city duma deputies, the Workers' Group, and other right-wing socialists at the ground level, came out strongly on the side of the strike movement. Melancon argues that they asserted their leadership over passive elements of workers, and 'two days later, stole the march in summoning the soviet'.⁶⁴ The success of the general strike that expanded the participants in the strikes and demonstrations far beyond what the militant politicised workers had imagined possible ironically provided fertile grounds for the moderate socialists to take the leadership away from the left socialist bloc.

While the experience in the streets on 25 February made the leaders who lived in the midst of the movement more radical, the sensitive antennae of the Okhrana accurately caught the decisive change in the atmosphere of the crowds. Indicating a dangerous alignment between the demonstrators and the soldiers, Kochgar warned: 'If a moment is lost and the leadership is transferred to the high echelons of the revolutionary underground, the events will take the widest scale'.⁶⁵ One of the most intelligent and articulate Okhrana agents, Limonin (Bolshevik Shurkanov), a member of the Bolshevik Vyborg District Committee, reported to the *gradonachal'nik*:

63 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., ll. 31–2; Document 12, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 57.

64 Melancon 1990, pp. 249–55; Melancon 2000, pp. 29–30.

65 *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, p. 169.

The people became convinced that a revolution had begun, that its success would be assured for the masses, that the government was powerless to suppress the movement since the army units were not standing behind it, that a decisive victory would be near, since the army units would openly go to the side of the revolutionary forces, if not today then tomorrow, that the movement which had started would not die down, but would grow without interruption to a victorious end and to an overthrow of the state.⁶⁶

The security authorities ignored these insightful warnings.

Security Authorities' Reaction to the General Strike

The police forces clearly had to take a defensive position in the face of the massive, aggressive demonstration. This fact, coupled with the highly disturbing Okhrana reports, compelled security authorities to proceed to the last stage of the contingency plan – an active deployment of troops with the maximum use of firearms.⁶⁷ On the night of 25–6 February, the police arrested 100 revolutionary leaders and activists, including five member of the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee.⁶⁸

Nicholas's telegram to Khabalov provided the military authorities with the excuse to switch to an all-out offensive. The news of serious disturbances in the capital was first sent by Golitsyn on 24 February, but news of the seriousness of the unrest reached Nicholas in Mogilev on 25 February through the empress's telegram and the report of the palace commandant, Major-General V.N. Voeikov, who had kept in touch with Protopopov. On the night of 25 February, Nicholas ordered Khabalov by telegram to 'quell by tomorrow the disturbances in the capital which are inexcusable in view of the difficulties of the war with Germany and Austria'. Later Khabalov testified before the Extraordinary Investigation Commission of the Provisional Government: 'This telegram took me by surprise ... But what should I do? The emperor ordered: you must shoot

66 Ibid. pp. 173–4. This report was dated 26 February, but the content of the report was obviously concerned with the situation of 25 February.

67 An elaborate plan dividing the city into sixteen security districts and assignments of military units and the police detachment is given in Document 15, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 61–71.

68 Document 14, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 59.

... It was a terrible blow. Because I could not see how this measure which I had been trying to avoid in the past days could without fail lead to a desirable result'.⁶⁹ This testimony should not be taken too literally. The objective reality of 25 February clearly showed that the measures designed for the second stage of the contingency plan could no longer subdue the demonstrators. Even on this day, some officers found it necessary to use firearms to disperse the crowds, a violation of Khabalov's instructions in the second stage. It was plain, even without the emperor's telegram, that draconian measures would be needed to deal with the unrest if it were to be put down once and for all.

As usual, Khabalov convened a strategic conference at the *gradonachal'stvo* at 10 p.m. After reading the emperor's telegram he announced that he would order the troops to fire upon recalcitrant demonstrators on the next day. Khabalov issued two proclamations to the populace, and had them posted throughout the city. One was addressed to all the workers, ordering them to return to their work by 28 February, Tuesday. He sternly warned that any violators of this ultimatum would have to face life in uniform at the most dangerous front.⁷⁰ The other served notice to the populace that 'any gathering in the street is forbidden' and that Khabalov had given permission to the soldiers 'to use arms for the restoration of order in the capital'. The workers did not pay much attention to Khabalov's proclamations. One of the crowd gathered in front of the proclamation posted on a wall in Vyborg District commented: 'It is interesting to see how he is going to send all of us to the front. Who is going to produce supplies for the army? He himself?''⁷¹ Protopopov and Vasil'ev were alarmed by the development in the city, and, as noted above, sent the police during the night to arrest more than one hundred activists.⁷²

Although the security authorities decided to take rigorous measures against the demonstrators, they neglected to report the real situation in the capital to the high command at the front. Khabalov sent the first news of the unrest

69 Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1, pp. 190; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 69.

70 Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924–7, vol. 1, p. 191; Martynov 1927, p. 82.

71 RGIA, f. 1282, 1917 g., op. 1, d. 741, l. 6; Gordienko 1957, p. 61.

72 The precise number of the arrested is not known. On 24 February altogether 7,538 were in various prisons in Petrograd; on 25 February the number of prisoners rose to 7,652, an increase of 114. The increase in the Rodzhestvo police precinct probably resulted from the arrests of the participants in the meeting held at the initiative of the Workers' Group. GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., ll. 24, 29. It would be interesting to study the composition of the arrested activists, but unfortunately such material has not been discovered.

in Petrograd to the Stavka only on 25 February. In this telegram, outlining the development of the unrest since 23 February, Khabalov optimistically stated: 'Today, 25 February, the attempts of the workers to penetrate into the Nevskii were successfully thwarted. A part [of the demonstrators] who managed to penetrate thereto were driven away by the Cossacks'.⁷³ This picture had little resemblance to what actually happened in the streets in Petrograd. Although he mentioned some of the serious incidents involving the killing of police officers, his report gave the impression that with the large reinforcements from the outskirts of Petrograd the capital was securely protected.

The two telegrams dispatched by Beliaev conveyed an even more optimistic picture, seriously distorting the real situation. Beliaev assured the tsar that since the military authorities were taking adequate measures to suppress the disturbances, order would be restored by the next day. In his telegram to Voeikov, the war minister stated: 'the commander of the military district is taking energetically all the measures to put an end to further disturbances'.⁷⁴ In this way, security authorities in Petrograd tried to hide their embarrassment at allowing such a wide-scale disturbance in Petrograd on 25 February, and left the Stavka in the dark as to the real situation in the capital.

Golitsyn convened a Council of Ministers meeting at midnight at his apartment on Mokhovaia 41, just off Liteinyi Prospekt, not far from the Central War Industries Committee where the police arrested the participants. Not only the cabinet members but also senior statesmen such as Trepov, Nikolai Maklakov, and Prince A.A. Shirinskii-Shikhmatov also took part in the meeting. The majority of the ministers expressed scepticism in relation to Protopopov's optimism. After reading the imperial order, Khabalov assured the ministers that on the next day 30,000 soldiers assisted by artilleries and armoured cars would take a decisive offensive against the rebels. The minister of foreign affairs, N.N. Pokrovskii, interrupted. Could the government really expect to eradicate the fundamental cause for the unrest only by military means? Pokrovskii argued that it was about time to seek a political solution: resignation of all the ministers and the formation of a new cabinet through negotiations with the Duma, in fact, a ministry of confidence. The foreign minister went as far as to suggest the names of persons who might successfully command the confidence of the nation: P.N. Ignat'ev, A.A. Polivanov, and General M.V. Alekseev. This proposal met with the support of the minister of agriculture, A.A. Rittikh, and

73 Telegram of Khabalov to Alekseev, no. 486, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, pp. 4–5.

74 *Lukomskii* 1922, vol. 1, p. 123; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 20; Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 136; Document 74, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 204.

some others. But Protopopov bitterly opposed any compromise with the Duma, which was, in his opinion, the major instigator of the present unrest. Only two reactionary ministers, N.A. Dobrovol'skii, minister of justice, and N.I. Raev, procurator of the Holy Synod, supported Protopopov. The majority favoured negotiations with the Duma. According to the secretary to the Council of Ministers, I.N. Lodyzhenovskii, the Council of Ministers also discussed Beliaev's proposal to declare a state of siege in Petrograd. But it did not take any action on this proposal. Having decided to delegate the responsibilities of negotiations with the Duma to Pokrovskii and Rittikh, the council of ministers adjourned the meeting at three o'clock in the morning. The popular rising thus succeeded in causing a crack in the tsar's cabinet.⁷⁵

Petrograd on the Night of the General Strike

On the third day the strike movement developed into a general strike, engulfing all segments of society. Police and troops no longer controlled the crowds. The demonstrators' attacks on the police became more violent and deliberate, and the soldiers more openly expressed their sympathy with the crowds. Many felt that a revolution had begun. Revolutionary underground organisations strove to create a centre of the movement. While the tsar ordered military authorities in Petrograd to shoot to kill the demonstrators, his cabinet decided to avert the crisis by negotiating with the Duma. The situation was moving quickly toward a climax.

As the last demonstrators slipped out of the centre of the city, Petrograd was restored to tranquillity. As the commotion and noise stopped, eerie silence crept onto Nevskii Prospekt. Only the lights of the Royal Alexander Theatre shone brightly for the premiere of Lermontov's *Masquerade*.

French Ambassador Paleologue took his secretary's wife, Vicomtesse du Halgouet, to a concert at the Mariinskii Theater. The concert hall was almost empty. After glancing around the deserted hall 'with eyes that were almost in tears', the violinist Enesco came close to the audience at the corner of the orchestra, and played a piece by Saint-Saens. When Paléologue left the theatre, the usually lively Theatre Square was desolate. Their car, the only one in the square, passed through the deserted city. They saw Moika Bridge and the

75 For the Council of Ministers meeting on 25 February, GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, ll. 119, 175; Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1, pp. 192–4; Deposition of Golitsyn, Padenie 1925, vol. 2, pp. 231–3; Balk 1929, p. 6; Kulikov 2014a, pp. 169–72.

Lithuanian Castle heavily guarded by the gendarmes and troops. Madame du Halgouet remarked: 'Are we witnessing the last night of the regime?'⁷⁶ It was too hasty a remark: the regime had two more nights to spare.

76 Paleologue n.d., vol. 3, pp. 215–16.

Bloody Sunday: February 26

Troops Shoot at Demonstrators

Sunday, 26 February, was a sunny winter day. The bright sun, the blue sky, the crisp air, and the soft snow that covered the ground during the night created a holiday spirit. In the heart of Petrograd, however, the morning sun unveiled an extraordinary scene. The streets had been turned into a military camp overnight.

During the night under the powerful light from projectors set on the spires of the Admiralty and the city duma building, the security authorities had busily made preparations for the anticipated 'battle' with the demonstrators. As darkness gradually lifted, the morning light revealed that soldiers formed pickets in front of buildings, at major intersections, bridges and railway stations; sentinels paced watchfully in the streets with rifles on their shoulders. Mounted patrols and squads of cavalry trotted in the city streets, while soldiers of the Sapper Battalion rolled field telephone lines from one intersection to another. The policemen at sentinel posts were removed and police detachments armed with rifles took their positions. In the courtyards the Red Cross established its headquarters and prepared sanitary wagons and stretchers. After eleven o'clock in the morning machine-gun units rolled on to Nevskii and installed their guns at strategic intersections along the way. At the centre of the city 10,000 soldiers and policemen, now clothed in soldiers' uniform, were deployed.¹

No pedestrians nor trams and cabs were visible in the heart of the city. Cabmen took the yokes off their horses. All the city schools, together with many other private schools, were closed until Tuesday. No one was permitted to go out into the streets in the centre, and those who had to go out were stopped by soldiers on patrol and asked for identification. All stores, restaurants and cafes were closed. For the first time since 23 February all the bridges were raised to prevent demonstrators from crossing the Neva. Khabalov dispatched

1 V.D. Bonch-Bruevich, 'Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia', *OR RNB*, f. 369, no. 16, d. 34, ll. 2–3; Leiberov 1979, p. 179. For the most recent description on the events on 26 February, Ganelin 2014d, pp. 120–58.

a telegram to the Stavka: 'Today, 26 February, it has been quiet in the city since morning'.²

His judgement was premature. This day gates were closed at most of the factories and, unable to use them as rallying points, the workers, individually or in small groups, assembled directly in the major streets of their districts and marched toward the centre of the city. The bridges were up, but it was no trouble to cross the Neva on the ice. It was not until late in the morning that the first demonstrators appeared on Nevskii, marching triumphantly and festively, singing revolutionary songs and shouting slogans. But the number of the demonstrators was considerably smaller, making them vulnerable to attacks from the security forces. Besides, this Sunday the demonstrators came out without 'weapons' that they had picked up from their workbenches on the previous day.³ As soon as they reached the Nevskii the mood and the scene changed. Unlike the previous days, the soldiers systematically and ruthlessly fired upon the approaching crowd.

The strategy of the security forces was to close the entrance of the demonstrators onto Nevskii. For that they deployed the training detachments of the Pavlovskii Regiment to guard the upper part of Nevskii from Fontanka and Eketerininskii Canal and five bridges in that area. At the end of Nevskii, Znamenskaia Square was guarded by two training detachments of the Volynskii Regiment, and a detachment of the Semenovskii Regiment was deployed in between at the intersection of Nevskii, Liteinyi and Vladimirskii Prospekts.⁴

Four major shooting incidents took place. Soldiers of the Semenovskii Regiment, taking positions at the intersection of the Nevskii and Vladimirskii Prospekts, fired on the crowd, killing and wounding several people.⁵ More serious shooting incidents took place on the upper part of Nevskii near the Gostinyi Dvor on Nevskii and Sadovaia. Demonstrators, holding street meetings at the intersection there, suddenly met with volleys of fire from the soldiers of the training detachment of the Pavlovskii Regiment. The crowds scattered, trying to hide behind the buildings, but since many buildings had closed their doors, helpless crowds crouched under the windows, behind the arches of the gates and entrances of the basements. Dead bodies lay flat on the snowy street. During the intervals of shooting, they carried the dead and wounded to the city

2 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 8, d. 679, ch. 3, l. 112; Khabalov to Alekseev, no. 3703, Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a, p. 5.

3 Leiberov 1979, p. 182.

4 Cherniaev 1989, p. 156.

5 GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, l. 357; Document 14, Fevral'skaia revoliutiia 1996, p. 60; Martynov 1927, p. 85; Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, p. 170.

duma, leaving stains of dark blood on the snow. After a few volleys, the streets were empty. Altogether eighteen wounded demonstrators were brought into the city duma, which suddenly became a field hospital, staffed with student volunteers wearing the armbands of the Red Cross and doctors and nurses who had rushed to the scene. This was the first appearance of the voluntary sanitary detachments that were to play an important role in the subsequent days.⁶

The third and the fourth incidents – more serious than the first two – involved the first and the second training detachments of the Volynskii Regiment that took positions on the south side of Znamenskaia Square. The commander of the detachments, Major I.S. Lashkevich, tried to enforce strict discipline among the reluctant soldiers. At first, he attempted to disperse the crowds by sending squads of mounted patrols, giving them an order to use nagaiaks and sabres if necessary. The patrol soldiers, however, begged the demonstrators to disperse, rather than using their weapons. The angered commander immediately had one private arrested for insubordination. On another occasion, Lashkevich abused a non-commissioned officer when the latter refused to strike an old woman who approached him and pleaded with him not to shoot. The soldiers sensed that the decisive moment was approaching. What should they do when ordered to shoot? They secretly asked Sergeant Kirpichnikov, a sympathiser with the demonstrators. Kirpichnikov answered: 'If they make us shoot, shoot in the air. You cannot help obeying the order, otherwise they will shoot us'.⁷

Unable to disperse the crowds in the square, Lashkevich finally decided to fire upon them. A bugle sounded as a warning signal, but the crowds remained, apparently not understanding what would come next. Second Lieutenant Vorontsov-Vil'iaminov, commanding officer of the second training detachment, shouted: 'Fire!' Sharp cracks echoed in the square. The panic-stricken crowds ran in all directions, seeking shelter and leaving their bleeding comrades behind. Some soldiers intentionally shot into the air. Vorontsov-Vil'iaminov was enraged, snatched a rifle from one of the soldiers, and began shooting at the fleeing people. Forty persons were killed and more were wounded. Police dragged the dead bodies to the middle of the square and among them were two soldiers in uniform who had joined the demonstration.

6 GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, ll. 356–7; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., ll. 45, 46; RGIA, f. 1276, op. 8, d. 679, ch. 3, l. 112; Martynov 1927, p. 85; Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, p. 170; Document 14, Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, p. 60; Ermanskii 1927, p. 145; Gordienko 1957, p. 60; Kaiurov 1923, p. 165; Leiberov 1979, p. 184; Mil'chik 1933, quoted in Cherniaev 1989, pp. 157–8; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 172.

7 Kirpichnikov 1917, pp. 7–8.

On the east side of the square, the first training detachment that took positions facing the intersection of Suvorov Prospekt and First Rozhdestvenskaia Street also fired on demonstrators gathering there, and killed ten persons and wounded several.⁸ According to Leiberov's accounts, no fewer than 170 to 200 demonstrators were killed or wounded. If his calculation is correct, the 'massacre on the Nevskii' was a major event comparable to the Bloody Sunday of 1905, the Lena massacre of 1912, and the Ivanovo-Voznesensk massacre of 1915, each touching off major labour unrests.

Frightened crowds disappeared from Nevskii behind buildings and inside houses. Some rushed into a cafe, which became filled with workers with visor-caps. They, together with the regular customers – dandies in fine clothes and gold rings, well-dressed ladies, and prostitutes – spoke in frightened whispers and peered through the curtains at the streets. Someone said in a low voice: 'It's the training detachment. The careerists!'⁹ All the troops involved in the shootings on 26 February were the training detachments of the guard regiments – the special military units designed to train non-commissioned officers from specially selected soldiers.

After the shootings, the crowds viewed the police and the troops of the training detachments with extreme but wary hostility. As soon as the shooting stopped, people reappeared in the streets and threw rocks and pieces of ice at them. Some who had been chased away from Znamenskaia Square into Old Nevskii Prospekt and Goncharnaia Street hid behind buildings and shot at the military patrols. Five policemen, who were patrolling on Apraksin Street behind Suvorov Theatre, were suddenly attacked by sniper fire and barely escaped to nearby police headquarters. At the intersection of Ital'ianskaia and Sadovaia Streets, the crowds killed an ensign of the Pavlovskii Regiment who chased the demonstrators with unsheathed sabres. Other instances of attacks on the police were also reported.¹⁰

The revolution had now reached a new stage. From then on the demonstrators came out onto the streets fully aware of the danger of being gunned down. Would the movement continue to be supported by most of the workers or would it dissipate? The soldiers, cornered at last by the orders to shoot, had to choose between their conscience and obedience. Could the govern-

8 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., ll. 45, 46; Document 14, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 60; Kirpichnikov 1917, p. 8; Martynov 1927, p. 85; *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, p. 170. Many gymnasias students and women students in higher education volunteered to establish first aid stations. Document 14, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 60.

9 Volin 1917, pp. 12–13.

10 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., ll. 46, 49; Leiberov 1979, p. 186.

ment continue suppressing its conscience in the name of discipline? The fate of the revolution depended on these questions, as the events of 26 February clearly demonstrated. As long as the majority of the soldiers remained within the boundaries of military discipline, an insurrection would have no chance for success.

Revolutionary Leaders Assess the Situation

The shooting incidents unnerved the leaders of the demonstration. It appeared to the SR worker Mil'chik 'that the movement was destroyed, that tsarism had taken the upper-hand, and that on the following day the soldiers would begin shooting at the workers in the workers' district'. The Bolshevik worker Kaiurov believed: 'The uprising is coming to an end. The demonstration had no arms, nothing with which to answer to the government, which had taken a decisive measure'.¹¹ The Bolshevik Russian Bureau of the Central Committee held its meeting late at night. Chugurin again pleaded with Shliapnikov to call for the seizure of weapons and creation of a workers' militia. This militant Bolshevik insisted that armed workers would be able to turn the tide in their favour. But after the soldiers' shooting no one was convinced. Shliapnikov argued that the only hope for the revolution would lie in a transfer of the allegiance of the soldiers. The committee finally decided to continue the struggle, concentrating all the Bolsheviks' energy on propaganda among the soldiers.¹²

Members of the Vyborg District Committee, which, due to the arrests of most of the Petersburg Committee members on the previous night, assumed the function of the defunct Petersburg Committee, met outside the city limits. In the gloom of the meeting, many expressed the opinion that the Bolsheviks should bring the movement to an end.¹³ Fatigue and the penetrating cold, however, prevented them from reaching a definite plan. The meeting adjourned after it was decided that they would meet at Kaiurov's apartment on the following day. Early next morning about forty representatives from various factories and a member of the defunct Petersburg Committee, K.I. Shutko, gathered

¹¹ Mil'chik 1931, pp. 82–3; Kaiurov 1923, p. 165.

¹² Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 127.

¹³ Early on the morning of 26 February, the Russian Bureau held an emergency meeting with the party members of the Vyborg District Committee. They discussed how to fill the gap of the defunct Petersburg Committee, whose members had been arrested with a few exceptions by the police. The Vyborg Committee was asked to take over the role of the Petersburg Committee. Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 121–2; Kaiurov 1923, pp. 165–6.

at Kaiurov's apartment. 'Shurkanov', an Okhrana spy, Limonin, from the Aivaz Factory, presented the most radical opinion, calling for the continuation of the struggle and including the use of firearms. He was supported by the majority, who adopted a resolution calling for the continuation of the strike, a transformation of the struggle into an armed uprising, fraternisation with the soldiers, seizure of weapons, and the prompt dissemination among the workers of a manifesto published by the Bolshevik party.¹⁴

There is little information about how the other revolutionary activists reacted to the shooting incidents, but judging from SR worker Mil'chik's reaction, they must have injected a sense of pessimism, dampening the enthusiastic hope to transform the general strike into a revolution. Nevertheless, it is likely that as the Bolshevik activists did, they, too, decided to continue the strike and demonstration on the following day. Their hope must have rested on the past workers' reactions to Bloody Sunday of 1905, the Lena massacre and the massacre of Ivanovo-Voznesensk. It is unimaginable that, faced with the massacre on Nevskii, the seasoned veterans of the revolutionary movements would suspend the strike and demonstration that had reached an unprecedented peak on the previous day. Their optimism may have been dampened, but they would go to the factories with more determination to keep the movement going.

In fact, the worker activists attempted to arm themselves by attacking undermanned police stations in the working-class districts. In the Vyborg District, defying Shliapnikov's order, Chugurin led an assault on the police station, obtaining revolvers and sabres.

Workers of Promet and the Metal Factory secured weapons secretly smuggled out by the sympathetic soldiers of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment. In Lesnoi a Bolshevik student group secured 50 rifles, several revolvers, and a boxful of cartridges.¹⁵ On that night several barricades were erected in certain

14 Kaiurov 1923, p. 166; N. Sveshnikov, 'Otryvki iz vospominanii', *Petrogradskaia pravda*, March 14, 1923. In my 1981 edition on the February Revolution, I cited an Okhrana agent's information reported by an SR, 'Matveev', by telephone and wrote that their call for strike, closure of entertainment business and formation of workers' military detachments was the general militant reaction prompted by the shooting incidents on that day. Three other reports conveyed on this day, by 'Krest'ianov', 'Stepanov', and 'Limonin' (a Bolshevik, Shurkanov) also appear to have been made before the shooting incidents, and therefore do not accurately convey the mood of the workers or the activists. *Febrarl'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, pp. 171–5. Melancon is ambiguous about the timing of the information by 'Matveev', and states that 'Limonin' wrote this report 'after the events of 26 February'. Melancon 1990, p. 265.

15 Leiberov 1979, p. 185.

sections of the city.¹⁶ As the Bloody Sunday of 1905 touched off the Revolution of 1905, this 'bloody Sunday' on 26 February looked like a prelude to another revolution.

The Socialist Information Bureau, which had been meeting since 23 February, met again at Kerensky's apartment in the evening. In addition to Kerenskii, Zenzinov (right SR), M. Berzin, S.F. Znamenskii (Trudoviks), N. Sukhanov (non-party with left Menshevik leanings), Aleksandrovich and Iurenev attended. The Bolshevik Pozhhello had been arrested, and Shliapnikov did not attend. The right and the left were divided and a stormy debate ensued. According to Kerenskii, Iurenev presented a pessimistic picture after the shooting incidents, saying that the movement was subsiding. The right objected to the slogan 'Down with the War', insisted on by the left, fearing that this slogan would frighten the liberals. The right proposed the creation of a soviet to meet at the Duma, but Iurenev and Aleksandrovich opposed. Consistent with their position that they had opposed any demonstration to go to the Tauride Palace on 14 February, they were opposed to steering the movement in support of the Duma.¹⁷

This meeting of the top socialist leaders revealed two important facts that had profound implications for the future course of the revolution. First, the moderate wing of the socialists, represented by Kerenskii, took a definite stand to support the strike and demonstration despite the shooting incidents, or, perhaps, became more determined to support the movement because of them. They were eager to exploit the tragic bloodshed to channel the mass movement against the regime in support of the all-social – *obshchestvennyi* – movement in cooperation with the liberals in the Duma to topple the government. Closely connected with the liberals, especially with the radical wing of the liberals, they had reasonable expectations that the shooting incidents would enrage the liberals, causing them to take the side of 'the people' against the government. Their aim was therefore to steer the mass demonstrations to the Tauride Palace in support of the Duma. Their call for the creation of a soviet served this purpose. Kerenskii and his like-minded colleagues among the right socialists should be credited for their leadership and foresight, which were to bear important fruit on the following day.

The second important significance of the socialist leaders' meeting was that this vision shared by the right socialists was strenuously opposed by the left socialists. They opposed the creation of a soviet, not because they did not support the idea of a soviet, but because they did not endorse a soviet centred

16 Leiberov 1979, p. 186.

17 Melancon 1979, pp. 260–3; Melancon 2000, p. 22; Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 224.

around the Duma. The left socialists rejected the mass movement as an all-social movement in cooperation with the liberals. The movement should be not only against the tsarist government but also against the bourgeoisie, against the war, not in support of the war. Thus the two completely different paths for revolution were starkly displayed at the Information Bureau held at Kerenskii's apartment.¹⁸

The significance of the 'massacre' on the Nevskii, however, rested with its impact on two other players: first on the soldiers, and second on the liberals. In his last report on 26 February, before the shooting events took place, an Okhrana spy, Limonin (Shurkanov), noted: 'Now everything depends upon the direction of the army units; if they do not turn to the side of the proletariat, the movement will quickly subside; but if the troops stand against the government, nothing will be able to save the country from revolutionary upheaval'.¹⁹

Revolt of the Pavlovskii Regiment

Military authorities tightened regulations in the barracks by cutting contact between soldiers and the outside world. From the outbreak of the strike movement on 23 February, soldiers were denied passes and the privilege of reading newspapers and using telephones, and were confined tightly within their barracks.²⁰ Nevertheless it was impossible to keep the news entirely from the soldiers – news from the streets spread quickly in the barracks. And the soldiers talked.

Thus, when they were deployed to suppress the demonstrators during the February days, they showed their sympathy, tacitly or in action in some cases, with the demonstrators. But the shooting order on 26 February erased the safe middle ground between sympathy with the demonstrators and military discipline.

The Pavlovskii Regiment consisting of 66 officers and more than 6,300 soldiers was commanded by Colonel E.N. Eksten.²¹ The three companies were stationed in the Pavlovskii barracks between the Mars Field and Millionnaia Street and Aptekarskii Lane, but the 4th company of 1,500 soldiers, mostly com-

18 My argument here is stimulated by Melancon's excellent treatment of this issue. See Melancon 2000, pp. 22–3.

19 Quoted in E.N. Burdzhakov 1967, p. 182.

20 Baranovskaia 1968, p. 25.

21 The best account for the revolt of the Pavlovskii Regiment is Cherinaev 1989, pp. 152–76. This account is based on his article.

posed of the evacuees from the front, were quartered in the barracks between Moika and Kaniushnaia Square. The commanding officers, suspicious of the reliability of the Fourth Company, locked up their soldiers within the barracks from the beginning of the disturbance on 23 February, and relied exclusively on the training detachment to suppress the demonstration. In the afternoon, around 3 o'clock after the training detachment of this regiment fired upon the demonstrators on the Nevskii near the city duma, a group of workers rushed to the barracks and told the soldiers. Soldiers of the Fourth Company were outraged by the news. One young soldier shouted: 'We are not going to pour people's blood on our white collar of the Pavlovtsy!' Soldiers jumped off the plank beds and rushed to the courtyard. They broke into the company arsenal, but contrary to their expectations, they found only thirty rifles (for the training of one thousand soldiers) and less than a hundred cartridges. Pushing aside Commander Colonel Eksten, a hundred mutineers went out into the streets. They moved along the Ekaterininskii Canal toward Nevskii under the command of an unknown non-commissioned officer, with only the vague notion that they had to make their comrades stop shooting at the demonstrators. As they moved along the canal, they encountered a squad of mounted police that suddenly appeared from behind Mikhailovskaia Square. The soldiers opened fire upon the police, killing one policeman and wounding another. This volley of fire exhausted all their cartridges.²² According to Tereshchenko the soldiers cordoned off the territory between Bol'shaia Kaniushnaia Street and the Moika River, setting up several check points.²³

The revolt was immediately reported to Khabalov, who ordered Pavlenkov 'to take all necessary measures so as not to spread this further', and sent a company of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment commanded by Captain V.N. Timoshenko-Ruban to suppress it. The soldiers of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment, however, refused to fire upon the mutineers. After the initial outburst of anger wore out, the insurgents faced cold reality: other demonstrators they might have joined were nowhere in sight and they had used all their ammunition. Sensing doom, they decided to return to their barracks and to incite rebellion among other soldiers.

In the meantime, not only the officers of the Pavlovskii Regiment but also the officers from other units rushed to the Pavlovskii barracks and walked from

22 Cherniaev 1989, pp. 158–69; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., l. 48; Martynov 1927, pp. 87–9; Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, p. 170; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 164–7; Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1, pp. 195–202; Baranovskaia 1968, pp. 25–31; Wildman 1980, p. 142.

23 Tereshchenko interview, Lyandres pp. 255–6.

one bay to another between the soldiers' plank beds. They told the soldiers that the training detachment had been removed from the streets and the regimental chaplain gave a lecture on the soldier's duty to the tsar and fatherland. As soon as the Fourth Company returned, the insurgents were disarmed and the entire company was placed under strict surveillance.

Nevertheless, it turned out that twenty-one soldiers were still missing.²⁴ Officers and soldiers of the training detachment guarded the room and machine guns were installed at the door, their muzzles facing directly inside the bay. Having overseen the return of the revolted soldiers into the barracks, Colonel Eksten left the barracks. But he was immediately surrounded by angry demonstrators coming from the direction of Nevskii Prospekt, The mobs took his revolver, grabbed his sabre, cut off three of his fingers and his head.²⁵

The revolt of the Fourth Company gravely alarmed the military authorities. Beliaev demanded immediate execution of all participants without trial, but Khabalov did not take such draconian measures, perhaps fearing that such action might provoke an even larger soldiers' revolt. He had nineteen ringleaders arrested and imprisoned in the Petropavlovsk Fortress during the night.²⁶ On the next morning Khabalov himself visited the barracks, warning the soldiers that only the death penalty would await those who might join a similar rebellion in the future. He had no way of knowing that in a few hours an even larger soldiers' uprising would begin.

Burdzhalov and Sobolev argue that the revolt of the Pavlovskii Regiment had no consequences on the soldiers' revolt on 27 February. Cherniaev challenges this view. He notes that the news of the revolt spread widely to the Duma circles. Kerenskii and Rodzianko learned about it already in the evening, and other activists such as Sukhanov and Maxim Gorky also knew about it. According to Cherniaev, the revolt of the Pavlovskii Regiment was not an isolated event that had little impact on the subsequent event, but rather should be considered as the first of the chain reaction.²⁷

²⁴ Baranovskaia 1968, p. 29.

²⁵ Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie* 1924, vol. 1, pp. 201–1; Cherniaev 1989, p. 162.

²⁶ Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie* 1924, vol. 1, p. 196; Martynov 1927, pp. 88–90. Baranovskaia for the first time published the names of the twenty-one ringleaders. Baranovskaia 1968, p. 31. These are also included in Cherniaev 1989, pp. 172–3.

²⁷ Cherniaev 1989, pp. 164–5.

Security Authorities and the Government Respond to the Revolt

At the critical moment, when the success or the failure of the revolution depended almost totally upon the attitude of the soldiers, the rebellion of the Pavlovskii Regiment was an ominous sign for the future. This incident symbolised the effect of the shooting order on the soldiers. A rebellion of more than a hundred soldiers constituted a serious threat to the maintenance of order. Nevertheless, Khabalov and Beliaev decided not to report the incident to the Stavka, and sent optimistic information that did not mention the Pavlovskii rebellion.²⁸ Balk later commented on the short-sightedness of the military leaders, stating that despite having achieved 'such brilliant success in restoring order in the streets' the military authorities led by 'weaklings and confused people' failed to take advantage of their success.²⁹ Nevertheless, the news of the revolt was conveyed by Protopopov and Rodzianko to the Stavka already by the late evening of 26 February. Despite Beliaev's and Khabalov's optimistic reports, the Stavka was beginning to worry about the security of the capital.³⁰

While the troops were firing on demonstrators, Rittikh and Pokrovskii met representatives of the Duma, N.V. Savich, V. Maklakov, E.M. Balashov, and I.I. Dmitriukov early in the morning of 26 February. The Duma critics presented the formation of a ministry of confidence as a minimal condition of restoring order, although they disagreed among themselves as to the advisability of adjourning the Duma.³¹ The success of the repression on 26 February, however, hardened the government's attitude toward the Duma. The majority of the cabinet members, who had considered a compromise with the Duma as a necessary evil on the previous night, now saw a political solution as unnecessary. When Pokrovskii and Rittikh reported back the result of their negotiations with Duma delegates, the cabinet members listened with boredom and summarily dismissed the possibility of further negotiations. According to Protopopov, the cabinet rejected the demand for a ministry of confidence, and decided to prorogue the Duma over the strong objections of Pokrovskii and Rittikh.³²

28 Lukomskii 1922, vol. 1, p. 124. It was not until the early afternoon of the following day that Khabalov finally mentioned the revolt of the Pavlovskii Regiment. Telegram of Khabalov to the tsar, no. 56, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 8.

29 Quoted in Burdzhakov 1967, p. 176.

30 Cherniaev 1989, p. 165.

31 Kulikov 2014a, pp. 173–4. Miliukov states that he also attended the negotiations, but he does not recall what was discussed. Miliukov 1955, p. 289.

32 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, l. 176; Supplementary deposition of Protopopov, *Padenie* 1925, vol. 4, pp. 99–100; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, ll. 120, 121.

Emboldened by the shooting incidents, the government threw a gauntlet to the Duma liberals. Having reviewed the government's strong actions against the demonstrations, the abortive attempt for a revolt by the Pavlovskii Regiment and the arrests of the workers who gathered at the Central War Industries Committee, Protopopov predicted that on Monday, the workers would return to their benches.³³

The Duma Liberals React to the Shooting Incidents

As an Okhrana agent 'N.N.' reported that the Social Democrats and the Trudoviks were challenging the Kadets and the Progressists either to tell the government to continue shooting the demonstrators or to stand at the head of the revolution.³⁴ On the evening of 26 February, the Kadets, supported by the Progressists and the socialist deputies, formally submitted to the Duma Chairman to hold the official session on 27 February. Reluctant to hold the official session, Rodzianko agreed to hold a private meeting of the Duma deputies at 2 p.m. on Monday. He also agreed to convene a Council of Elders' meeting – senioren convent – which consisted of a representative from each party.³⁵

The shooting had provoked a strong reaction from Rodzianko. A factory owner living on Nevskii called Rodzianko by telephone and informed him that the security forces were shooting everyone who came near his building, and already 15 people had been killed. Rodzianko telephoned Khabalov and protested in a trembling voice: 'What is the firing for? Why the blood?'³⁶

On this day Rodzianko dispatched the first of a series of telegrams to the tsar, with definite political designs, that were destined to influence the course of the revolution. In the telegram Rodzianko informed the tsar that the people's disturbance had begun in Petrograd, and that the unrest was expanding its scope with spontaneous character. The direct cause of this disturbance was the shortage of bread, but it was fuelled by their complete distrust of the

33 Document 76, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 206–7.

34 *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, p. 173.

35 Layndres 1997, pp. 119–20; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 109, 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 238. For the detailed explanations of 'Protokoly sobytii' and 'Protokol zasedanii', see the footnote in Chapter 18. According to the Moscow Progressist newspaper, *Utro Rossii*, a senioren convent meeting was supposed to be held on Sunday night, but it did not meet the quorum. Document 16, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 72.

36 *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, p. 173; Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie* 1924, vol. 1, p. 214.

government that had brought the country to this difficult situation. It might be possible to suppress it temporarily by spilling the blood of citizens, but to prevent the recurrence of such unrest would be impossible. The Chairman of the Duma went on to state:

The government power finds itself in complete paralysis and totally powerless to restore order that has been broken. Sire, save Russia: humiliation and disgrace are threatening her. Under these conditions the war will not be able to be brought to a victorious end, since the fermentation [of discontent] is also spreading in the army and threatens to spread, unless a decisive end is put to the anarchy and disorder of power. Sire, immediately summon a person in whom the entire country can believe and entrust him to compose a government in which the entire population can have confidence. All Russia will follow such government, animated again by the belief in itself and in its leaders. In this unprecedented and frightening hour that might bring the most horrifying consequences, there is no other alternative and it is impossible to delay.³⁷

On receiving this telegram, Nicholas told the minister of the imperial court, Count V.B. Frederiks: 'Again this fat Rodzianko has written me all sorts of nonsense, to which I will not even reply.'³⁸ Thanks to this telegram Rodzianko has been credited with predicting what was to come on the following day. But on 26 February, when the government for the first time took the upper hand in the situation, there existed no 'anarchy', and no paralysis of the government. The description of the situation was distorted to serve Rodzianko's political goal: the formation of a ministry of confidence. On the basis of other sources of information that depicted the situation in Petrograd differently and more accurately, Nicholas rejected Rodzianko's telegram as a hoax.³⁹

The chairman of the Duma sent another telegram with the same contents to Generals Alekseev, General Ruzskii, Evert, and Brusilov in the front. Capitulating upon the grave disruption of the movement of war supplies resulting from the current crisis, Rodzianko concluded that the only solution would be to form a ministry of confidence and urged the military leaders to support his

37 'Pervaia telegramma M.V. Rodzianko Tsariu', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnal-istov*, No. 1, 27 February 1917, p. 1; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 109; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 238; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 40.

38 Avdeev 1923, vol. 1, p. 40.

39 Hasegawa 1976, pp. 158–9.

position before the tsar.⁴⁰ Rodzianko attempted to mobilise support from military leaders for his intended goal, appealing to their fear of major disruption of military operations. Generals at the front must have found themselves at a loss as to what to make of the two completely conflicting stories. Rodzianko's pessimistic news did not correspond at all to Beliaev and Khabalov's assurances that the situation was completely under control. What happened the next day appeared to the military leaders to vindicate the accuracy of Rodzianko's evaluation, despite the fact that the contrary was true – a factor that led the military leaders to accept Rodzianko's information uncritically for the following several days.

In the evening Rodzianko had dinner with Tereshchenko. All guests were discussing the significance of the abortive revolt of the Pavlovskii Regiment; whether it meant the beginning of a revolution or its end.⁴¹ Then late at night Rodzianko was invited to Golitsyn's apartment. The chairman of the Duma again protested against the shooting of demonstrators by the loyal troops. Golitsyn's reply was more humiliating to the Duma chairman: he handed to Rodzianko the imperial decree of the prorogation of the Duma. This decree was the gauntlet thrown at the Duma.⁴² This decree put Rodzianko in a dilemma. He had already agreed to hold a Council of Elders' meeting and a private meeting of the Duma deputies on Monday. Would the Duma members meekly submit themselves to the imperial decree and disperse? Or would they defy the decree and make a decisive move beyond what the Fundamental Laws dictated? The fate of the Duma thus hinged on the decisions of the Council of Elders and the private meeting scheduled on the following day.⁴³

40 Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a, pp. 5–6; Telegrammy Ruzkago 1923, p. 8. Rodzianko reported at the meeting of the senioren convent on the following day that he had sent these telegrams. See Document 43, 'Protokol sobytii', Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, p. 110; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 239–40, 'Telegramma M.V. Rodzianko glavnokomanduiushchim frontami', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistsov*, No. 1, 27 February, 1917, p. 1.

41 Tereshchenko interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 256.

42 Kulikov argues that the prorogation of the Duma was the continuation of Golitsyn's compromise policy in the sense that the prorogation was supposed to be accompanied by the formation of a ministry of confidence sometime in March, before the next session of the Duma was supposed to open. I find this argument unconvincing. It would be difficult to imagine how the liberals would be lured into accepting this compromise after the bloody suppression of the demonstrators. Kulikov 2014a, pp. 176–7.

43 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 8, d. 679, ch. 3, l. 112; Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, pp. 172–3, 'Protokol sobytii', Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, p. 109; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 238. In my 1981 book, I quoted Volin, who remembered a group of demonstrators that gathered

Bloody Sunday as a Turning Point

Bloody Sunday of 1917 was the turning point of the February Revolution. While the government's offensive temporarily weakened the will of the leaders who had led the movement since 23 February, it strengthened the determination of the masses of workers to continue the struggle. This day, unlike the previous one, government troops had complete control of the streets in the heart of the city. But the victory was deceptive. Khabalov's order to the unwilling soldiers to fire upon the demonstrators pushed them further into a moral dilemma. The unsuccessful revolt of the soldiers of the Pavlovskii Regiment was a harbinger for the events to come on the following day.⁴⁴

An Okhrana agent reported on 26 February that at the lunch time gathering of the officers at Astoria Hotel, a colonel made a speech in which he apologised for deviating from the usual rule by not proposing a toast to the Supreme Commander, but only a toast to the army.⁴⁵ It was an ominous sign as to what attitude the officers would take once the soldiers' insurrection was to begin.

The government won the battle on this day, but the director of the police department, Vasil'ev, began sleeping in his friend's apartment. At nine o'clock in the evening the city's electricity was shut off at the government's order. Military patrols stood on the street corners and let no one go near Nevskii Prospekt. From the darkness came sporadic sounds of shooting echoed by the howling of dogs. No one had ever heard dogs howl on Nevskii before; it happened only on that night of 26 February.⁴⁶

at the Tauride Palace and denounced the Duma deputies who decided to suspend the debate early and to postpone the Duma session until Tuesday. The crowd was shouting, 'Down with the Duma'. This account seems unreliable. Hasegawa 1981, p. 275. Volin 1917, pp. 17–18. Also in my 1981 book, I wrote that the imperial decree of prorogation drove the Duma deputies out of bed to gather at the Tauride Palace. Lyandres' careful study makes it clear that many deputies did not learn of the imperial decree until Monday morning, when they gathered at the Duma.

44 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, l. 176.

45 *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1918, p. 173.

46 Volin 1917, p. 22.

The Insurrection: February 27

The Soldiers Rise Up in Revolt

The soldiers who made the first decisive move for the historic insurrection were those of the training detachments of the Volynskii Regiment who were directly involved in the shootings on Nevskii on the previous day.¹ One of the leaders of the uprising, Sergeant Kirpichnikov, describes how the rebels prepared for the insurrection.² On the evening of 26 February, young noncommissioned officers of this regiment returned in a gloomy mood to the barracks from the action in the streets and their conversation turned to the possibility of insubordination. Kirpichnikov and another noncommissioned officer, Mikhail Markov, who assumed leadership of the conspiracy, easily won the allegiance of the already frustrated platoon and squad leaders, who solemnly pledged not to obey the order to take positions at Znamenskaia Square the next day. The conspirators quickly spread this decision to their trusted comrades, and took measures to seize all available machine guns and to confine the soldiers tightly in their bays lest the secret should leak out. In the meantime, Kirpichnikov succeeded in obtaining cartridges by forging an order from the company commander, Lashkevich.³

The next morning the soldiers assembled in the large corridor of the second floor earlier than usual. Kirpichnikov revealed the decision: 'Enough blood has

1 The insurrection resulted from the independent decisions of the soldiers, not from the influence of the workers' propaganda in the barracks. The worker activists concentrated their propaganda activities on the barracks of the Moscow Regiment in the Vyborg District. The insurrection began in the Volynskii Regiment, which was least influenced by the workers' propaganda activities. The soldiers of the Moscow Regiment did not join the insurrection until much later on this day. Kaiurov 1923, p. 166; Burdzhlov 1967, pp. 183–4.

2 Kirpichnikov 1917, pp. 10–16; Kirpichnikov 1927. The latter is taken from the first article in *Byloe*. 185; Burdzhlov 1967, pp. 183–4.

3 Late at night Lashkevich telephoned Kirpichnikov inquiring whether everything was all right in the barracks. When he learned that Kirpichnikov had obtained cartridges in his name without his authorisation, Lashkevich demanded an explanation. Kirpichnikov barely managed to avoid detection by replying that he was too eager to shoot those German spies in the streets to wait for his superior's authorisation. Satisfied with this explanation, Lashkevich gave Kirpichnikov the instruction to give reveille at seven and wait for him in formation. Kirpichnikov 1917, pp. 10–12.

been shed. It is time to die for freedom'. This appeal to insubordination was enthusiastically met with hurrahs from the soldiers. Kirpichnikov's instructions were to answer orders from the company commander with cheers of 'hurrah' and to obey only orders from Kirpichnikov.

At ten minutes to eight Second Lieutenant Kolokolov appeared. He detected no sign of rebelliousness among the soldiers, who quietly stood in platoon formation. At eight o'clock Lashkevich arrived. No sooner had he greeted Kirpichnikov than the soldiers loudly shouted: 'Hurrah!' Unable to make out the meaning of these unexpected shouts, 'he stopped and, maliciously smiling, asked what it meant'. One of the soldiers shouted: 'Enough blood!' Markov declared: 'We will no longer shoot and we also do not wish to shed our brothers' blood in vain'. Frightened as much as angered by the hostile protests, Lashkevich attempted to restore order by reading Nicholas's telegram ordering the suppression of disorder. This provoked the anger of the soldiers even further. Kolokolov sensed the approaching danger and slipped out of the building. Fearing that the second lieutenant would send for troops to suppress this insubordination, Kirpichnikov ordered Lashkevich to leave the building immediately. The commander hurried across the barracks yard, but the soldiers rushed to the windows and fired at him. Lashkevich was instantly killed.⁴ The rebellion had begun.

The rebels ran out of the building. Having organised themselves in squad formation in the barracks yard, they scattered to other companies of the regiment to appeal to them to join the revolt. With the exception of the Fourth Company, however, the large majority of the soldiers refused to take part in the rebellion.⁵ The rebellion of the soldiers of Volynskii Regiment thus failed to involve the entire regiment and, like the attempt by the soldiers of Pavlovskii

4 Ibid., pp. 12–13; GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, l. 357.

5 We do not know the precise number of the rebel soldiers of the Volynskii Regiment, but it does not appear to be very large. The major contingent came from the soldiers of the training detachments. Kirpichnikov 1917, p. 13; Perets 1917, pp. 23–5; GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, l. 12. The last item cited above was the last Okhrana report before its disintegration. The mutiny of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment is more obscure than the revolt of the Volynskii Regiment. Since some companies of this regiment, which were stationed on Millionnaia, joined the loyal troops almost intact, it appears that the extent to which the soldiers joined the revolt was not large. According to Leiberov, there was some Bolshevik influence in the Preobrazhenskii Regiment. In the weapon workshop located at the corner of Grecheskaia and Gospital' streets, a Bolshevik, A.N. Paderin, former Putilov worker and activist in the sick funds, worked and maintained contact with the Bolshevik Narva District Committee. However, his role in the revolt of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment on 27 February is not clear.

Regiment on the previous night, it appeared at first as though it would end as an isolated, local episode. Yet there was one significant difference. While the barracks of the Pavlovskii Regiment were isolated from other regimental barracks, those of the Volynskii Regiment were located close to the barracks of three other units, the Preobrazhenskii Regiment, the Lithuanian Regiment and the Sixth Sapper Battalion across the street. About nine o'clock, rebels of the Volynskii Regiment marched out of the gates of the barracks and moved toward the regiments along Vilenskii Lane. When the rebel soldiers approached the compound of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment the military drill being conducted on the field was immediately halted. As the rebels invaded the barracks yard, they encountered resistance. After the melee, the rebels, assisted by some of the soldiers of the Preobrazhenskii, captured the regimental arsenal and freed prisoners from the stockade. An officer who tried to defend the arsenal was killed by the insurgents.⁶ According to Skobelev, who received a report from a socialist publicist N.I. Iordanskii shortly after 8 a.m., the armed Preobrazhenskii soldiers moved to the corner of Suvorovskii Prospekt and 9th Preobrazhenskaya Street, where they stopped all cars, ordering passengers to get out, and drove the cars to capture Nevskii.⁷

Soldiers of the Lithuanian Regiment were standing in formation in the regimental compound when they heard the commotion and noise from the barracks of the Volynskii Regiment. As soon as the rebels appeared, shouting 'hurrah!' and shooting blank cartridges in the air, some immediately abandoned their posts and joined the revolt. Many vacillated as officers appealed to them to maintain neutrality, but not for long. Soon the entire barracks was in confusion with the blare of trumpets, clanging of the regimental bell and rifle shots. Many soldiers ran into the streets to join the revolt.⁸ The rebels, joined by some civilians, moved along Kirochnaia Street toward Liteinyi Prospekt. Some headed toward the barracks of the Sixth Sapper Battalion on Kirochnaia. Soldiers of this battalion heard the shooting and the shouts approaching their barracks while they were preparing for drills. Suddenly the barracks gates were thrown open and the insurgents rushed in, shouting: 'Hurrah, comrades, take rifles! Take cartridges!' The soldiers stormed the battalion arsenal and seized

6 Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, p. 176. The rebels captured 500 rifles and five machine guns in the Preobrazhenskii Regiment. Mints 1967, vol. 1, p. 538.

7 Skobelev Interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 173.

8 'Vpechatleniia soldata zapasnogo bataliona leib-gvardii Litovskogo Polka', *Pravda*, no. 5, 10 March 1917, pp. 4–5; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 186. The number of rebel soldiers in the Lithuanian Regiment is not known, but it appears that it provided the largest contingent at the initial stage of the insurrection.

all the rifles. The battalion commander, Colonel Gehring, and several officers were killed on the spot. The soldiers of the Sapper Battalion marched out of the barracks with their orchestra band in the lead.⁹ By noon the insurrection had thus spread to four regiments.

The internal workings of the soldiers' revolt on 27 February are difficult to establish. Malancon points out two factors: the presence of socialist activists within the army units and the pressure of the revolutionary parties from outside. According to Leiberov, soldiers of the Volynskii, Lithuanian, Preobrazhenskii Regiments, and the Sixth Sapper Battalion were under strong SR influence and to a lesser extent Menshevik and Bolshevik influence.¹⁰ The soldiers were also exposed to the propaganda activities of the revolutionary activists, to join the revolution, both in the streets, where they were deployed to suppress the demonstrations, and in the barracks. We have no way of knowing what conversations the soldiers had in their barracks, how the former revolutionary or strike movement activists influenced their fellow soldiers, and what role, if any, outside agitators and smuggled leaflets played in forming the soldiers' opinions, but it is not unreasonable to assume that the garrison soldiers were ready for revolt.

The insurgents marched along Kirochnaia, filling the entire width of the street. They fired volleys of shots at the barracks of the gendarme division, where the gendarmes had already deserted at the first news of the rebellion. The writer Mikhail Slonimskii, who served at the time in the Sixth Sapper Battalion, vividly remembers this first step toward revolution:

We marched forward to the unknown. The Engineer Officers' Training School, where I had received the first officer's title, had surrendered. A gendarme at the gate fired a shot, but immediately his rifle was taken away from his hands. Surrounded by the angry soldiers, he turned pale, and pleaded: 'Don't kill me; I didn't know you had a revolution'.¹¹

When the insurgents reached Liteinyi Prospekt, they turned to the right toward the Vyborg District.¹² Some of the soldiers broke into the Orudinskii Factory

9 O. Sipol', 'Iz vospominanii', *Petrogradskaia pravda*, 12 March, 1920, quoted in Burdzhalov 1967, pp. 186–7; Kirpichnikov 1917, p. 14; Slonimskii 1966, p. 13.

10 Leiberov 1979, pp. 233, 239; Melancon 1990, p. 258.

11 Kirpichnikov 1917, p. 14; Slonimskii 1966, p. 14.

12 It is not known why they decided to go to the Vyborg District. Wada examines three reasons: spontaneous decision, the existence of large caches of weapons in the Vyborg District, and the conscious attempts by the Bolshevik activists. Wada 1968 p. 414. By this

and completely disrupted the work. The rest of the rebels moved along toward Liteinyi Bridge, which was guarded by a training detachment of the Moscow Regiment.¹³

Vyborg Workers Begin the Armed Revolt

Early in the morning, still unaware of the soldiers' uprising on the other shore of the Neva, workers in the Vyborg District were continuing their strike. In Erikson and Aivaz, for instance, they held meetings and passed a resolution calling for continuation of the struggle against tsarism to complete victory. At nine o'clock in the morning more than a thousand workers gathered in Bol'shoi Sampsonievskii Prospekt and marched toward Liteinyi Bridge, singing revolutionary songs and waving red flags, but were scattered by the Cossacks.¹⁴ On this day the militant workers intended to do more than demonstrate. During the night Chugurin and his comrades of the fighting unit made a surprise attack on the armory in the Lesnoi District. Encountering little resistance, they seized rifles, revolvers, and bullets.

Between ten and eleven o'clock workers of Phoenix, Rozenkrantz, and the Petrograd Metal Factory occupied the Petrograd Cartridge Factory and seized a large amount of ammunition stocked in the factory. Demonstrators attacked the police station on Tikhvinskaia Street after a short fight with the police.¹⁵ After this, uniformed police completely disappeared from Vyborg District – the chief of police had instructed his subordinates to disguise themselves in civilian clothes and disappear in the streets.¹⁶ Then the workers moved on to attack Finland Station, where they disarmed the guard soldiers without any difficulty. About twelve o'clock noon the Vyborg workers attempted to move to the centre of the city through the Liteinyi Bridge. The first group met with volleys of fire from the training detachment of the Moscow Regiment. The militant workers charged and overcame the resistance, killing the commander

time the insurrection was already more than three hours old and many activists had joined the soldiers. Yet it was still an isolated event, and to expand the base of the insurrection and acquire more weapons, it was natural that the insurgents would head to the Vyborg District.

13 Kirpichnikov 1917, p. 14.

14 Leiberov 1957, p. 64; GARF, f. POO, op. 5, d. 669, l. 357.

15 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 357; Leiberov 1957, p. 64.

16 Burdzhakov 1967, p. 192.

and some soldiers.¹⁷ The first group of workers who broke through the bridge joined the insurgent soldiers on Liteinyi Prospekt.

As some workers were moving to the centre of the city, the soldiers conversely were trying to reach the Vyborg District. Around one o'clock in the afternoon the soldiers led by Kirpichnikov and Markov approached the Liteinyi Bridge and were fired upon by the troops of the Moscow Regiment. Several were killed and wounded. Kirpichnikov and Markov, joined by other insurgent soldiers, reached the bridge, and by talking with the soldiers of the Moscow Regiment, cleared the 'misunderstanding'. The soldiers of the Moscow Regiment no longer obstructed passage, and the insurgents crossed the bridge safely to the Vyborg District.¹⁸

Soon Nizhegorodskaya Street from the Liteinyi Bridge to Botkin Street were filled with soldiers carrying rifles with red ribbons around their bayonets. The workers were enthusiastic in their greeting – surrounding them, they hugged and kissed the insurgent soldiers. But the soldiers were far from exuberant. According to the SR worker Mil'chik, 'There was no excitement among the soldiers; they were frightened and depressed'. A Bolshevik worker, S. Skalov, also observed: 'On the faces of the rebels despair and fear of impending reprisals were visible ... They powerlessly marked time. Their mood was extremely gloomy and depressing'. But the appearance of the insurgent soldiers infected the workers with triumph. The crowd, joined by a few soldiers, attacked the weapon depot near Finland Station and armed themselves with whatever they could find. Bayonets were hanging from wadded overcoats – many filled their pockets with Colts and Nagans. Young workers came out, beaming, with a rifle, sometimes two, on their shoulders.¹⁹

The armed workers – the *sans-culottes*, Mil'chik called them – 'liberated' all the teahouses, cafes, restaurants and dining halls, and declared them 'property of the people'. With jokes and facetious remarks, but 'with revolutionary categoricalness', armed workers kicked out protesting owners and invited insurgent soldiers for a cup of tea. The soldiers, who were invited to one of these teahouses in Vyborg Street, were suddenly fired upon by a machine gun behind the church at the corner. The soldiers ran blindly, throwing away their rifles, to find cover. Some broke into the teahouse through a window. Inside, boiling water was toppled onto the floor, steaming up the house.²⁰

¹⁷ 'Dnevnik soldata v Vyborgskoi storone', *Pravda*, no. 5, 10 March 1917, p. 4.

¹⁸ Kirpichnikov 1917, pp. 14–15.

¹⁹ Mil'chik 1931, pp. 87–8; Skalov 1931, p. 116.

²⁰ Mil'chik 1931, p. 90.

To Skalov it was essential to lead these frightened soldiers to action before they began retreating, and to unite them with the revolutionary workers. Together with his two SR colleagues, Skalov suggested to the soldiers that they attack Kresty Prison and liberate the revolutionary leaders from the dungeon of tsarist oppression. However, only a few responded to this appeal, the remainder indifferently remained at the same place. Those few rebels moved on Simbirskaia Street toward the prison. The crowd gathered at Finland Station disappeared into the building as the rebels appealed to them to join with them to attack the Kresty, and workers of the Petrograd Cartridge Factory also ignored the appeal. Only a small contingent of seventy to a hundred insurgents made the attack on the Kresty.²¹

Attack on the Kresty Prison

The Kresty – officially the Petrograd Solitary Prison – were grim-looking brick buildings bounded by Arsenal Street and the Neva, where 2,400 prisoners – including political prisoners – were confined.²² The prison guards and the administrators offered little resistance. Despite their small number, the rebels destroyed the iron gates, disarmed the guards and set the prisoners free. They burned all the books and papers in a large bonfire in the prison yard.²³ Bund leader M. Rafes, an inmate of the Kresty, suddenly heard a deafening shot outside around two o'clock in the afternoon, then there was a continuing pounding of rifle butts on the prison gates. Inmates, responding, began hitting the bars in their cells with utensils. Suddenly the rebels appeared and opened the door of each cell. Finally, the door of Rafes's cell was opened, and there stood a soldier with a rifle and Rafes's fellow inmate, Breido, a Menshevik member of the War Industries Committee, who had been set free a moment before. Breido spoke in a voice of disbelief: 'These are the soldiers with rifles who liberated us'. The freed prisoners in tears kissed and embraced each other. Outside the prison, the police spy Abrasimov, a member of the Workers' Group of the War Industries Committee, also crying, walked around and gave Juda's kisses to the liberated political prisoners. Among those who were set free was

21 Skalov 1931, p. 116; according to M.I. Kalinin, a member of the Bolshevik Petersburg Committee, the crowd gathered at Finland Station demanding action. Kalinin stood up on the platform and appealed to the crowd to attack the Kresty. 'In an instant the idea was caught up and spread'. Kalinin 1929, vol. 3, p. 432.

22 The number of prisoners was derived from GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917 g., I. 29.

23 Skalov 1931, pp. 116–17; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 191.

B.O. Bogdanov, a member of the Petersburg Committee of the Menshevik party and secretary of the Workers' Group of the War Industries Committee. The rebels carried Bogdanov on their shoulders, and asked him to make a short speech. Choked with emotion, Bogdanov uttered a few incoherent sentences and ended his speech quickly with the words: 'Go continue your work. It is not the time for speeches.'²⁴ Those freed included not only political prisoners but also a great number of criminals. Martynov admits: 'Exactly from this moment the uprising in the city began to bear a bloody character; murders, pillage, arson, and various provocatory offenses had begun to be committed'.²⁵ The rebels who had liberated the Kresty marched to Tauride Palace.

Attack on the Moscow Regiment and the Bicycle Battalion

The Vyborg District housed two military barracks, one for the Moscow Regiment and the other for the Bicycle Battalion – the two units that had maintained discipline relatively well. About four hundred rebels, including the remaining insurgents of the Volynskii Regiment led by Kirpichnikov, gathered in front of the Moscow Regiment barracks. Officers had prepared for the insurgents' attack by assigning a training detachment inside the barracks gate and machine guns were set in the second-floor windows of the officers' building. As the insurgents appealed to the soldiers of the Moscow Regiment to join the insurrection, volleys of shots were fired upon them. A young second lieutenant among the rebels shouted: 'Those who endear freedom – march forward!' About twenty-five stalwarts including Kirpichnikov charged across the barracks yard. The troops of the training detachment retreated but a hail of machine gun and rifle fire met the charging rebels. The second lieutenant was instantly killed and the rest were forced to retreat.²⁶ The crowds responded by firing on the barracks, and some ran across the yard again. A Bolshevik worker, Kondrat'ev, was among the first to reach the barracks. He appealed to the soldiers to join the insurrection. The soldiers, however, were extremely reluctant. Only after being given an ultimatum – that the rebels would attack the barracks with heavy artillery – did they come out to join the rebels in the streets. Some officers ran away, while the rest confined themselves in the upper floor of the officers' hall, where they ceased their resistance when they exhausted

24 Rafes 1922, pp. 184–5.

25 Martynov 1927, p. 100.

26 Kirpichnikov 1917, p. 15.

their ammunition.²⁷ By three o'clock in the afternoon, the Moscow Regiment had capitulated to the rebels.

The Bicycle Battalion was the only armed unit in Petrograd that demonstrated substantial resistance to the mutineers on 27 February. Because of the basic technical skills required of them, the soldiers of this battalion were in the main sons of the middle and upper classes. This helped ease the tension between officers and soldiers – a tension that rose from an irreconcilable class antagonism in other military units. The Bicycle Battalion was exceptional – the morale of the soldiers was high.²⁸

When the insurgents who gathered at the barracks gate of the Bicycle Battalion attacked the officers on duty, soldiers of the battalion rushed to rescue them, shooting at the rebels. The commander, Colonel Balkashin, hurried from one barrack to another, personally inspecting the soldiers and encouraging them to stand firm against the rebels. He assigned two companies to guard the gates. About 6 p.m. the second wave of insurgents attacked. A large crowd moved along Sampsonievskii Prospekt, pushing the sentinel companies back toward the barracks. Colonel Balkashin then withdrew his troops, leaving only a small platoon at the gates. Instead, he installed machine guns on the ground pointing at the gates. Realising the strength of resistance, the crowd no longer charged upon the soldiers. The resistance of the Bicycle Battalion proved that an organised military unit, led by a capable officer, could cope with larger numbers of disorganised rebels effectively. Yet the episode was an isolated one. Balkashin repeatedly and futilely attempted to telephone headquarters for advice. By the evening all telephone connections with the centre of the city had been cut off. Two intelligence officers dispatched by Colonel Balkashin to the headquarters never returned. During the night insurgents broke into the battalion armoury, seizing all the cartridges there.²⁹ The defeat of this lone defence of the old regime became a matter of time.

Insurgents Capture Weapons and the Danger of Lawlessness

Gradually the insurgent soldiers submerged into the crowds. Kirpichnikov could gather only fifteen soldiers of the Volynskii Regiment and five or six soldiers of the Lithuanian and Preobrazhenskii Regiments altogether. There

²⁷ Kondrat'ev 1923, p. 68; Mil'chik 1931, p. 89.

²⁸ Martynov 1927, pp. 98–9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

was no semblance of order. The armed mob began to control the streets. A Bolshevik worker, Gordienko, tried to organise them into military formation, but the soldiers reacted with utmost hostility to the civilian's order. Nevertheless, through the attacks on the prison and the military barracks, the rebel soldiers and the workers began establishing a sense of solidarity. 'On Sampsonievskii Prospekt', a worker, Mil'chik, recalls, 'cleaving the crowd, an automobile packed with soldiers with rifles roared through. On the bayonets there was something we had never seen nor heard of: red flags were flying'.³⁰

In the heart of the workers' district along Sampsonievskii Prospekt near Erikson, the police headquarters were burned to the ground in the evening. The crowd built a huge bonfire in front of the burning building, which illuminated the workers and the youths 'armed to the teeth'. The crowd dragged policemen from 'garrets and cellars, where they had hid themselves'. They beat the helpless victims at intervals; they beat them, rested a while, and beat them again. Almost insane with terror, bloody, and with swollen and bruised eyes, the policemen repeatedly threw themselves at the knees of the crowd, pleading for mercy.³¹ *Samosudy* [street justice], which was to be the most horrifying aspect of the Russian Revolution after the February Revolution, began with the lynching of the policemen.

It was out of the question for the insurgent soldiers to return to the barracks to rest or sleep. Workers took it upon themselves to convert the expropriated 'property of the people' into temporary sleeping quarters. The 'liberated' Petrograd Women's Prison was made into a huge hostel for the insurgent soldiers, but they, understandably, refused to spend the night in the prison. In many of the workers' apartment houses hung hastily written signs: 'Soldiers cordially invited for meals and lodging'. The Vyborg Consumers' Association decided to give all food at its disposal to the insurgent soldiers.³² This was partly a demonstration of solidarity between workers and soldiers, but partly motivated by the workers' practical concern to prevent the insurgent soldiers from turning into uncontrollable marauders looting and pillaging in the city.

In the afternoon another contingent of soldiers and workers in the Vyborg District crossed the bridge to the centre of the city. They marched toward Tauride Palace, which was rapidly becoming the centre of the insurrection. The insurgents attacked the House of Detention on Shpalernaia Street and freed 958 prisoners. They set fire to the Circuit Court; black smoke rose up in the

³⁰ Mil'chik 1931, p. 81.

³¹ Ibid., p. 91.

³² Ibid., pp. 90–1.

winter sky. On the other side of the Circuit Court across Liteinyi Prospekt they broke into the Main Artillery Administration and the Arsenal adjacent to it. Having killed General Matusov, chief of the Arsenal, they captured 40,000 rifles and 30,000 revolvers. These weapons, in addition to those captured from regimental arsenals, were freely handed to the workers and other civilians in the crowd. General Manikovskii barely escaped from the insurgents, although Guchkov and other liberals believed for some time that he had been killed.³³ During the rebels' attack on the Arsenal, a Japanese businessman who was negotiating for a weapon purchase agreement with the Artillery Administration was shot to death.³⁴ Rebel soldiers of the Armoured Car Division reassembled the armoured cars that had been disassembled on Khabalov's order and, draping them in red banners, careened through Liteinyi Prospekt.³⁵ Soldiers and workers armed with rifles, with cartridge belts across their shoulders, aimlessly shot in the air from the cars.

Soon the streets were filled with crowds holding newly acquired weapons like children with Christmas gifts. An English eyewitness saw a hooligan with an officer's sword fastened over his overcoat, a rifle in one hand and a revolver in the other. A worker was standing by, holding an officer's sword in one hand and a bayonet in the other. A young boy was walking with a large butcher knife on his shoulder. One man had a rifle in one hand and a tram-line cleaner in the other. A student was walking with two rifles and a belt of machine-gun bullets around his waist. And even a quiet-looking businessman held a large rifle and wore a cartridge belt around his business suit.³⁶

A number of youths experimented with their new toys by firing them off into every direction. Many innocent bystanders were killed when young boys threw cartridges into the fires. One young boy of about twelve years of age was warming himself, together with a large number of soldiers, at one of the bonfires in the streets. Suddenly he pulled the trigger of the automatic rifle he was holding. One of the soldiers standing nearby fell dead. The shocked boy kept the trigger pulled back until all seven bullets were fired. Three soldiers were instantly killed, and four were wounded.³⁷

33 Leiberov 1957, p. 63; Tereshchenko interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 256–7. More than 2,000 shells and 2,000,000 cartridges fell into the hands of the masses. Mints 1967, vol. 1, p. 538.

34 Kikuchi 1973, pp. 12, 134, 158.

35 Shklovsky 1970, p. 12. The armored car division had two garages: one on Kovenskaia Street near the barracks of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment and the other on Dvorianskaia Street near the Petropavlovsk Fortress in the Petrograd District.

36 Jones 1917, pp. 119–20.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

As the disorganised mob controlled the streets, anarchy and lawlessness became widespread. A young professor of Petrograd University, Pitirim Sorokin, witnessed more than once 'groups of soldiers and street loafers looting wine-shops with no one to stop them'.³⁸ A gymnasium student noted in his diary that crowds broke into a bakery at Sadovaia and Bol'shaia Pod'iatskaia, and hurried home with their loot.³⁹ According to a Japanese student, two insurgent soldiers, who were staying in the same boarding house, returned with pictures, carpets, and a hunting dog they had expropriated from the wealthy, and then threw a big orgy with prostitutes with the money they got by selling their loot.⁴⁰ Despite Soviet-era historians' attempts to ignore the criminal elements in the uprising, it would be pointless to argue that these destructive actions never took place or that they were committed only by the criminal element that had nothing to do with the revolution.

Leiberov argues that from 23 February to 27 February altogether 97 stores were attacked and 29 people arrested. But most of those arrested were not the industrial proletariat and of those workers arrested, most were teenagers. From this Leiberov concludes that the criminal element had no connection with the organised revolutionary movement, and that 97 cases of vandalism committed out of a total of 6,827 stores in the city were miniscule.⁴¹ Leiberov's figures are based on police archives up to 26 February; on 27 February the police disintegrated, and so there exists no record of pillaging and looting on this day. Contrary to Leiberov's contention, mob violence became pervasive. It was partly owing to the release of all the criminals from the prisons. According to a police record, as of 26 February the city's prisons held 7,652 prisoners.⁴² It is not known how many of these were political, but those who were set free were not merely the political activists, but also murderers, arsonists, burglars and rapists. To compound the situation, all the city's law-enforcement organs disappeared. But not all the criminal actions were committed by the criminals. What guided the rebels were not necessarily lofty ideals or cold rational political calculations but rather more primitive emotions – anger, fear, instinct for excitement. A criminal element and destructive impulses were an integral part of the revolutionary process.

Indeed, to some intelligentsia, even those sympathetic with the revolution, what emerged in the streets in Petrograd appeared to be *stikhiia* – an element-

38 Sorokin 1956, p. 13.

39 RGIA, f. 1101, op. 1, d. 1195, ll. 4–5.

40 Kikuchi 1973, p. 193.

41 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, pp. 286–8.

42 GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917, ll. 24–9.

ary, anarchical, primitive force of the oppressed classes, to which any political articulation remained alien. V.B. Stankevich, who witnessed the unleashed *stikhiia* in the streets as an officer as well as a socialist stated:

With what slogans did the soldiers go out? They went out, obeying some mysterious voice; and then with obvious indifference and coldness they afterwards allowed themselves to hang all possible slogans upon themselves. Who led them when they conquered Petrograd, when they burned the Circuit Court? Not a political thought, not a revolutionary slogan, not a conspiracy, and not a mutiny. But an elementary movement that suddenly reduced the whole old regime to ashes without leaving anything ... Unknown, mysterious, irrational, welling up out of deepest layers of popular feeling, suddenly the street overflowed with gray mass, bayonets sparkled, shots rang out, and bullets whistled.⁴³

Insurrection Spreads to the Petrograd Side

The soldiers' insurrection spread to other parts of the city. In the Petrograd District the troops guarded all the bridges on the Neva and the Nevka from early in the morning and effectively isolated the island from both the Vyborg District and the centre of the city. Nevertheless, the people in this district learned the news of the uprising and of its development by telephone, which was operating all day. In the morning a large crowd gathered in the streets, particularly on Bol'shoi Prospekt and Kamennooostrovskii Prospekt. They were mostly in a festive mood, making no determined effort to break through the heavy cordon on the bridges to make connections with the centre of the insurrection.⁴⁴ After three o'clock in the afternoon, a crowd of about one hundred men and women, many of them youngsters, assembled in front of the barracks of the Grenadier Regiment. Waving a red flag, they appealed to the soldiers to join the insurrection. The grenadiers watched curiously and when a few stalwarts attempted to enter the barracks yard, they let them through the gates without resistance. Inside the compound, the rebels demanded that the prisoners confined in the stockade be freed immediately. The soldiers fulfilled this demand, but refused to join the insurrection.⁴⁵

43 Stankevich 1920, pp. 76–7.

44 Peshekhonov 1923, pp. 255–6.

45 Ibid., pp. 257–8; I. Golubuev, 'Kak grenadery prisoedinilis' k narodu', *Pravda*, no. 5, 12 March 1917, p. 5.

By evening the cordon at the Troitskii Bridge was broken, and trucks carrying soldiers and workers armed with rifles and wearing cartridge belts around their shoulders roared into the Petrograd District. Immediately, they were directed to the police stations and the barracks of military units. One of the trucks, in which a Bolshevik worker, Gordienko, alertly took a position in front of a machine gun, moved to the garage of the Armoured Car Division on Dvorianskaia Street near the Petropavlovsk Fortress. The soldiers of the Armoured Car Division joined the insurrection with two armoured cars, after volleys of machine guns were fired on the iron roof of the garage.⁴⁶ In the meantime, a second wave of demonstrators gathered in front of the barracks of the Grenadier Regiment, again appealing to the soldiers to abandon their posts. Some grenadiers slipped out of the gates, but the majority still remained in the barracks. As the third wave of demonstrators appeared, this time with armoured cars, the soldiers finally broke into the regimental armoury, seized all the weapons, and joined the crowds. With a band of orchestra in the lead, the insurgent grenadiers marched toward Tauride Palace.⁴⁷

Insurrection in Vasil'evskii Island and Southern Parts of the City

The barracks of the Finland Regiment were located on Vasil'evskii Island. The soldiers of this regiment had shown signs of agitation since Second Lieutenant Iossa, an officer of the regiment, killed a demonstrator on 25 February. Since then, the soldiers were forbidden to approach telephones and a guard was placed at each telephone in the barracks. On 27 February a training detachment was sent to protect the bridges so as to isolate the island from both Petrograd District and the centre of the city. Colonel Sadovskii ordered the soldiers of the training detachment to repulse at any cost the attack of 'the revolutionaries' and to keep them from Vasil'evskii Island. Yet after he learned the general situation in the capital, Sadovskii became disturbed and suddenly disappeared. The soldiers remaining in the barracks assembled in a large assembly hall, where junior officers of the companies appealed to the soldiers to be faithful to the fatherland and to their oaths. After the officers left, the soldiers secretly met and decided not to shoot at the insurgents and to join the insurrection when the rebels appeared. The insurgent soldiers and the armed workers staged a demonstration in the centre of the district, but no serious attempt was made

46 Gordienko 1957, p. 63.

47 Golubuev, 'Kak grenadery prisoeдинilis' k narodu', *Pravda*, 12 March 1917, p. 5.

to break in the regimental barracks. It was not until the second day of the insurrection that the Finland Regiment joined the insurrection.⁴⁸

The soldiers' insurrection spread to the south of the city, where the barracks of three regiments, the Semenovskii, the Izmailovskii and the Petrograd were located. Thousand of Putilov workers moved toward the centre of the city on the morning of 27 February, seizing weapons on the way from a gun shop in Aleksandrovskii Market. In the centre of the city additional weapons were handed to the workers. The armed workers now began attacks on the police stations, while others gathered near regimental barracks in an effort to draw soldiers into the insurrection.⁴⁹

In the morning a company of Semenovskii Regiment was deployed to protect the Moscow District from the insurgents, but the commander of the battalion decided to withdraw all the troops to the barracks, fearing that the insurgents might adversely influence his own soldiers. About eight o'clock in the evening, crowds assembled near the barracks; the entire machine-gun detachment, led by Sergeant Major Mel'nichukov, rushed out of the barracks with loud hurrahs. They, too, were led with a band, and marched to the police station in the district, where they ransacked the station and killed the police chief. The Semenovskii soldiers then moved toward the barracks of the Izmailovskii Regiment on Izmailovskii Prospekt.⁵⁰

Soldiers of Izmailovskii Regiment had learned of the insurrection of the army units early in the morning. All anticipated that freedom would come and that they would be emancipated from the 'cursed stone barracks'. Finally, at about eleven o'clock in the evening, the rebel Semenovskii soldiers appeared, shooting in the air and shouting: 'Brothers of Izmailovskii Regiment, come on out!' The insurgents easily disarmed the guards and, breaking into the barracks, freed prisoners from the stockade. The Izmailovskii soldiers rushed out with joyous hurrahs. All the officers disappeared. From there the crowd moved to the barracks of the Petrograd Regiment. A drunken officer fired on the crowd but was immediately captured. Joined by the soldiers of the Petrograd Regiment, the insurgent soldiers in the southern districts marched toward Tauride Palace.⁵¹

48 Starkov [Efremov], 'Prisoedinenie Finlandtsev', no. 23, *Pravda*, 1 April 1917, pp. 6–7; 'Vystuplenie leib-gvardii Finlandskago zapasnago polka', *Pravda*, no. 29, 11 April 1917.

49 Leiberov 1957, p. 67.

50 Zhuravlev, 'Prisoedinenie Semenovtsev', *Pravda*, no. 11, 17 March 1917.

51 Ibid; S.D. Izmailovtsev, 'Vystuplenie Izmailovtsev', *Pravda*, no. 14, 21 March 1917.

Strength of the Insurgents

The soldiers' insurrection that began in Volynskii Regiment early in the morning thus involved practically all the military units in Petrograd by the end of 27 February. It is estimated that the participants in the soldiers' insurrection rose from 10,200 in the morning to 25,700 in the afternoon, and to 66,700 by evening. It further grew in the morning of 28 February to 72,700, by afternoon to 112,000, and in the evening, 127,000. By the afternoon of 1 March, almost the entire garrison, 170,000 soldiers, took the side of the revolution.⁵²

What was the strength of this 'revolutionary force'? If one were to organise the rebelling soldiers and armed workers into one revolutionary army to defend the revolution against the expected counterrevolutionary attempt by the old regime, one would find oneself in an impossible situation. Once the soldiers abandoned their posts they became a disorganised, anarchical, unruly mob, heeding no authority, and taking an extremely hostile attitude toward any attempt to establish discipline and organisation. Kirpichnikov noted that only two hundred soldiers out of the many he had led to rebellion reached the Vyborg District.⁵³ Where did the rest go? They were in the streets, acting on their own. The mob created anarchy in the streets of Petrograd. They attacked barracks, police stations, and prisons, but left other strategically important positions in the city almost untouched; they made no conscious attempt to take over railway stations, the ministry of transport, the General Staff, the power station, or the water supply station. Shklovskii, who spent most of his time on this day at Nikolaevskii Station, suggested that the insurgents occupy the top floor of the Severnaia and Znamenskaia hotels so that they could keep the station covered. However, the necessary forces were not available. A guard hastily appointed from the soldiers running in and out immediately disappeared. Although insurgents attacked the central telephone station, they could not seize the office until midnight and telephone operations continued to function. Communications between Petrograd and the Stavka were never disrupted.⁵⁴

52 Drezen 1929, p. vi; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 489.

53 Kirpichnikov 1917, p. 15.

54 Shklovsky 1970, p. 15; Balk 1929 (Hoover), p. 9; Akaemov 1917, p. xxv. There were three special telegraph installations, known as the Hughes apparatus, which connected Petrograd directly with the Stavka and other fronts. These machines were installed at the Naval Staff, the General Staff, and the War Minister's residence. The insurgents attacked none of these offices. The Duma Committee made sure to guard them tightly since they were the vital link with the Stavka.

Nor did the insurgents ever attempt to spread the insurrection beyond the confines of Petrograd. To be sure, soldiers in surrounding areas joined the insurrection on the following days, but no conscious efforts of the Petrograd insurgents were responsible for this. The disarray and the absence of leadership of the insurgents were such that one of the Duma leaders, A. Bublikov (Progressive party deputy), noted: 'One disciplined division from the front would have been enough to quell the uprising. More than that, it would have been possible to pacify it by a simple blockade of railway movement from Petrograd'.⁵⁵ Likewise, Colonel L.S. Tugan-Baranovskii of the General Staff testified: 'For me, as a career military officer, it was clear that two regiments with machine-guns would have been sufficient to bring Petrograd back into submission'.⁵⁶ A remarkable fact of the February uprising was that it succeeded at all. What prevented the tsarist government from putting it down?

Ineptitude of the Security Authorities

When one looks into the uprising, one is struck by the extreme ineptitude of the security authorities. Not only could they not prevent the uprising from spreading throughout the city, but they also failed miserably to muster forces that could have rallied behind the tsarist government. The frightened, unnerved leadership made mistake after mistake, ultimately driving itself to total disintegration.

One of the peculiar aspects of the insurrection at its initial stage was the relative ease with which the rebels spread the rebellion to other military units. With a few exceptions, the rebel soldiers did not encounter any serious resistance, while many officers did not use force to keep the soldiers from joining the revolt, maintaining noncommittal neutrality as if they were indifferent bystanders. Certainly the revolt took them by surprise. At the sudden intrusion of the insurgents, the officers found themselves outnumbered as the reliability of the soldiers under their command suddenly became questionable. An officer of the Lithuanian Regiment, who ordered his men to fire upon the rebels, was stabbed to death by his own soldiers. Yet their inaction stemmed largely from their deep-rooted disillusionment with the regime, which they did not feel worth defending at the risk of their lives. In the absence of clear-cut directions from the top of the hierarchy, they withdrew from action. When the

55 Quoted in Ol'denburg 1949, vol. 2, p. 251.

56 Tugan-Baranovskii Interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 120.

mutineers came to the Armoured Car Division, the officers told the soldiers: 'Do what you think best'.⁵⁷ Many officers simply took refuge in the officers' clubs and in apartments of acquaintances in the city.

One important cause for the officers' inaction was the failure of the commanding hierarchy in Petrograd to mobilise the officers, who were more rigorously bound to military discipline than the soldiers, against the insurrection. News of the uprising in the Volynskii Regiment reached the *gradonachal'svto* shortly after eight o'clock in the morning. *Gradonachal'nik* Balk immediately relayed the news to Khabalov and Protopopov. Khabalov instructed Colonel Viskovskii, commander of the Volynskii Regiment: 'Do your best to prevent this from spreading. Make them return to the barracks and try to disarm them. Make them stay in the barracks'. There is no evidence to indicate that Khabalov took any measures other than this extremely ambiguous order to suppress the uprising at its incipient stage. As for Protopopov, after learning the news, he changed the subject and asked the *gradonachal'nik* what the latter thought about the imperial order of prorogation of the Duma. Met with Balk's negative estimation, Protopopov said: 'Well, let's see what God will do by evening'.⁵⁸ At the first news of the soldiers' uprising, what the minister in charge of public safety invoked was divine providence instead of giving specific instructions to quell the insurrection at the initial stage.

When Khabalov arrived at the *gradonachal'svto* about nine o'clock, he discovered the absence of Colonel Pavlenkov, who should have taken the necessary measures as commander of troops in the city of Petrograd.⁵⁹ Khabalov immediately transferred the command to Colonel Mikhail'chenko, commander of the Reserve Battalion of the Moscow Regiment.⁶⁰ This was the first of a series of mistakes Khabalov made on this day. Being a commander of a regimental battalion whose task had been limited to the security of one district of the city, Mikhail'chenko did not have sufficient familiarity with the contents and the

57 Kirpichnikov 1917, p. 14; Kutepov 1934, p. 164; Shklovsky 1970, p. 11.

58 Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1: 198; Balk 1929 (Hoover), p. 8.

59 Tugan-Baranovskii saw Pavlenkov at the *gradonachal'svto*. Tugan-Baranovskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 119. Tugan Baranovskii may be mistaken here, or Pavlenkov may have arrived late.

60 The Moscow Regiment itself was under attack from the insurgents that day. The absence of the commander may have played a part in the collapse of the resistance. It is not known where Khabalov was or what he was doing during the crucial period between the initial reception of the news at eight o'clock and his arrival at the *gradonachal'svto* at nine. At any rate, inaction during this time cost him dearly. Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1, p. 198.

background of the troop deployment policy in the contingency plans nor with the overall picture of troop strengths and morale. Moreover, the sudden change of command at this critical moment contributed to a grave breakdown of the commanding hierarchy. As one might expect, Mikhail'chenko took no active part in the formulation of counterinsurgency measures. As a result, Khabalov found himself in the position of commanding the loyal troops unaided by any other experienced officer. The realization of this responsibility panicked Khabalov, whose confusion and irresolution led the loyal troops to chaos, disarray and eventual disintegration.

The Petrograd District Chief of Police, Halle, was summoned to the *gradonachal'stvo* on this morning supposedly for the task of familiarising commanding personnel with the map of the city. A map of the city at this late stage? This itself suggests the haphazard nature of the entire counterinsurgency policy. When Halle arrived at the *gradonachal'stvo*, no one bothered about the map of the city: there was utter confusion and Khabalov and other commanding officers nervously scurried about from room to room. Colonel A.P. Kutepov, who talked to Khabalov, observed: 'I noticed that General Khabalov's lower jaw was quivering during the conversation'. Mikhail'chenko also admitted that after eleven o'clock no one knew who was commanding.⁶¹

By early in the afternoon police forces in Petrograd had disintegrated. At noon Balk had ordered to remove all police patrols from the streets. All the policemen had returned to headquarters, waiting, with absolutely nothing to do, for further instructions. But none came. The superiors disappeared through back doors in civilian clothes. The police chief of the Moscow District precinct advised his men to change clothes and to disappear as quickly as possible. According to the police chief of the Aleksandro-Nevskii police precinct, Kargelis, in the absence of instructions from above, 'we simply went home, leaving police headquarters, which were burned down by the evening of 27 February by the mobs'.⁶²

Many police officers escaped by disguising themselves as women. But even with a woman's dress, hat, and veil, many were discovered by the insurgents. Some were executed on the spot, and others were taken to a place of detention.⁶³ Others joined the revolution, waving a red flag, and marched to the Tauride Palace.⁶⁴ Crowds set fire to police stations – particularly spectacular was the one near Nikolaevskii Station. The building with its 150-foot tower

61 Burdzhakov, 1967, p. 194; Kutepov 1934, p. 161; Leiberov, 1970a, vol. 2, p. 433.

62 Leiberov 1970, vol. 2, pp. 437–38; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 22.

63 Jones 1917, p. 164.

64 Nikolaev 2012, pp. 1–39; Nikolaev 2013, pp. 38–50.

was ablaze for several hours. Some of the police officers, however, refused to go home. They took their arms, and barricading themselves on the rooftops and the corners of high buildings, shot at the crowds at random. According to Gruzdev, commissioned to investigate the shooting incidents during the February Revolution by the Provisional Government's Extraordinary Investigating Commission, such scattered shooting incidents were almost exclusively caused by police.⁶⁵

Since the elaborately constructed contingency plan did not anticipate a soldiers' uprising, Khabalov had to improvise counterinsurgency measures on the spot. Late in the morning, he made two decisions: to use armoured cars against the insurgents, and to organise a punitive detachment from reliable troops. Immediately Captain Antonovskii, assistant to the commander of the Armoured Car Division, was summoned to the *gradonachal'stvo*. Replying to Khabalov's order to get the armoured cars ready to suppress the 'disorder' in the streets, Antonovskii explained the 'technicalities' involved. Only one out of the eight armoured cars at his disposal would be ready immediately against the insurgents, the rest not until evening. Antonovskii added further that not one soldier of the division could be counted on to drive the armoured cars against the insurgents, and that it would be impossible to drive the cars with officers alone. Besides, he continued, the effectiveness of the armoured cars against the insurgents would be limited. Antonovskii suggested that the order should be directly referred to the commander of the division, Lieutenant-Colonel Khaletskii. Khabalov was furious. Threatening to chop off his head at further defiance of his order, Khabalov told Antonovskii to get the cars ready. But by the time Antonovskii returned to his division, the entire division had joined the revolution. All the cars had been put into operation, not against the revolution, but for it.⁶⁶

Kutepov's Futile Attempts to Suppress the Insurgents

Khabalov attempted to form loyal forces from the soldiers available nearby and divided them into two detachments – one to protect headquarters and the other to attack mutineers. Colonel A.P. Kutepov was appointed commander of this hastily organised punitive shock detachment. Colonel Kutepov, a recipient of the Order of St. George, had been in Petrograd only for a week on leave when

65 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, l. 185.

66 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, pp. 433–4.

he received the order of his appointment. Despite Kutepov's repeated refusal on the grounds of his unfamiliarity with the situation, Khabalov high-handedly imposed the appointment.⁶⁷

Kutepov was charged with clearing the area between Liteinyi Bridge and Znamenskaia Square of rebels, for which Khabalov gave him a company of the Keksholm Regiment and a machine gun. In addition, two companies of Preobrazhenskii Regiment (apparently stationed in the barracks at Millionnaia Street) that had not joined the insurrection, and a company of the Machine Gun Regiment, which had just arrived at Nikolaevskii Station from Oranienbaum, joined the punitive detachment, which altogether consisted of 1,000 soldiers and fifteen machine guns.⁶⁸ The reliability of these soldiers left much to be desired. Soldiers of Preobrazhenskii Regiment complained that they had not eaten since the previous afternoon. The machine gunners sullenly refused to return Kutepov's greetings. Moreover, Kutepov discovered that neither the water nor the glycerine necessary to fire machine guns were available to the machine gun company. Nevertheless, the important fact was that in the face of large-scale insurrection, these soldiers chose to remain within military discipline. Kutepov made the best of the situation – cajoling, intimidating, and encouraging. Despite reluctance, the soldiers followed Kutepov to the last moment, until resistance became meaningless.

About eleven o'clock, the punitive detachment left headquarters and marched on Nevskii Prospekt. The street that had been the centre of activities during the past days was quiet and it seemed to Kutepov unbelievable that an uprising was taking place.⁶⁹ But when the detachment reached Znamenskaia Square, Kutepov received the news from Khabalov's special emissary that, having set fire to the Circuit Court, the insurgents were approaching the Winter Palace.⁷⁰ Khabalov's plan was to clear the area along Liteinyi Prospekt, isolating the rebels in the Vyborg and Liteinaia districts and to secure the government controlled area west of the Liteinyi while waiting for reinforcements from the front. The insurgents, however, moved more quickly than he had anticipated, spoiling his plan to establish the front line in the Liteinyi. Accord-

67 Kutepov 1934, p. 161.

68 Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie* 1924, vol. 1, p. 214; Kutepov 1934, p. 161; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 67. For underestimation of Kutepov's forces, see Ioffe 1987, pp. 39–40.

69 Chikolini who went to Nevskii in the afternoon also noted that everything was quiet and normal business was conducted. Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 74. Tugan Baranovskii also went to Nevskii at 6 in the evening, and found 'not a soul' in the street, although there was sound of shooting. Tugan-Baranovskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 130.

70 Kutepov 1934, pp. 162–3.

ingly, Khabalov ordered Kutepov to move the detachment back to the *gradon-achal'stvo*, presumably through a more secure route along Nevskii Prospekt.

Reasonable though it might have been, this sudden change of basic strategy further convinced Kutepov of the ineptitude of the commanding authority. Exploding in anger, he flatly declared to Khabalov's emissary that he would follow the first order, moving along Liteinyi and then returning to the Winter Palace through Mars Field.⁷¹ This virtual insubordination of superior command caused a fatal lack of communication between the headquarters and the punitive detachment. Khabalov later testified:

Something impossible had happened on that day! The detachment proceeded with a brave and determined officer. But somehow it disappeared and there were no results. Something must have gone wrong: had it moved with determination, then it would have encountered this electrified crowd and the organised troops would have driven this crowd away to the corners of the Neva and the Tauride Gardens ... I sent [an envoy] but there was no news ... I sent another three platoons of Cossacks from those who were available to me. I have to say that after I sent this detachment I was left without any troops and had to gather another detachment in order to have something to resist with in case of further rebellion. I received only the information that Kutepov's detachment had gone as far as Kirochnaia, that it was moving along Kirochnaia and Spasskaia, but that it was impossible to move farther, and that it was necessary to send reinforcements.⁷²

This testimony is largely responsible for the legend later created by historians such as William Chamberlin that the loyal forces dispatched to suppress the uprising 'simply melted away as soon as they came into contact with the revolutionary mobs'.⁷³ This does not exactly correspond to the reality, however. It should be noted that Kutepov's troops demonstrated willingness to fulfil their commander's order. The punitive detachment maintained its cohesion, and put up a successful resistance against the insurgents until evening. But the isolation of Kutepov's forces and the lack of information about them reinforced Khabalov's sense of hopelessness.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 163.

⁷² Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie 1924*, vol. 1, pp. 198–9.

⁷³ Chamberlin 1935, vol. 1, p. 79.

Ignoring Khabalov's order, Kutepov moved his troops along Liteinyi Prospekt, where he encountered the insurgents for the first time. Kutepov decided to stay in the midsection of Liteinyi Prospekt, realising that it would not be easy to clear the entire street of the insurgents, who were amassing in its northern section. He sent one of the officers to telephone Khabalov of this decision – the last communication, as it turned out, between the punitive detachment and headquarters. Kutepov's forces immediately cleared the small area near Preobrazhenskii Cathedral between Kirochnaia and Basseinaia, and established the house of Count Musin-Pushkin (Liteinyi, no. 17) as the headquarters and Preobrazhenskaia Square as the troops' field of assembly.⁷⁴ A unit of the Keksholm Regiment led by Captain Davydov took position in the Officers' Club at the corner of Liteinyi Prospekt and Kirochnaia, and opened machine-gun fire on the demonstrators. One machine gunner, who refused to fire, was shot on the spot by Davydov.⁷⁵ An SR intellectual, N. Stepnoi, was standing on Liteinyi near the burning Circuit Court. A young teenager was making a speech in front of a small crowd, his eyes sparkling and his lean white face aglow with courage. As Stepnoi walked away, he heard a shot. He turned around, and saw the young man lying on the ground with his skull blown off and blood gushing out.⁷⁶ The northern section of Liteinyi was the most dangerous part of the city on that afternoon.

But Kutepov's decision to squat in the midsection of Liteinyi precipitated the disintegration of the loyal troops. His objective was to clear Liteinyi Prospekt and to establish the front line for the government-controlled area on the west. Kutepov realised the impossibility of carrying out this assignment without substantial reinforcements, which, he was also well aware, would not be provided. The midsection of Liteinyi itself had insufficient strategic significance to stake the existence of the entire detachment. Kutepov's decision contributed to the suicidal isolation of his troops as well as to the significant reduction of the strength of the loyal troops, which became separated into two sections of the city with no communications between them.

While Kutepov's troops failed to expand the occupied territories, they successfully held them from the insurgent's attacks. Despite grumblings and complaints of hunger and the lack of ammunition, the soldiers more or less obeyed Kutepov's order until they were completely surrounded. Kutepov's repeated requests for reinforcements and food remained unfulfilled. When he finally

74 Kutepov 1934, pp. 163–4.

75 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 435.

76 Stepnoi 1918, p. 12.

reached the *gradonachal'stvo* by telephone, no one answered, since the headquarters had moved to the Admiralty without Kutepov's knowledge. Casualties among his troops as well as his officers increased. As darkness fell, insurgents filled the streets, smashing street lamps and shooting at the troops. At this point, the loyal troops began to defect. Kutepov finally realised that the end of his resistance had arrived. He noted with bitterness:

A large part of my detachment mingled with the crowds. I understood that my detachment could no longer resist. I returned home, ordered the doors closed but gave instructions that my soldiers be fed bread and sausages. Not a piece of bread had been given to these soldiers.⁷⁷

It was only then, after he had closed the doors behind him, that Kutepov's troops 'melted away' among the insurgents.

Khabalov's Initial Reactions

In the meantime, Khabalov busily tried to bring the loyal troops together, ordering reserve regiments to send all available soldiers to the Palace Square. Not many regiments responded favourably to Khabalov's appeal, although two companies of Preobrazhenskii Regiment from the barracks on Millionnaia, an entire battalion of Pavlovskii Regiment, and three companies of Izmailovskii Regiment, among others, arrived in perfect composition, constituting the major core of the loyal forces. In addition, a company of the Third Rifle Regiment, three companies of the Eger Regiment, a company of the First Reserve Machine Gun Regiment and two artillery batteries (without shells, however) arrived at the Palace Square.⁷⁸ The commander of the 181st Infantry Regiment answered that though his soldiers did not take part in the uprising, he could not expect them to join the loyal forces, while the commander of the Finland Regiment wanted to keep the reliable soldiers at his own disposal. The lack of weapons and ammunition created a serious problem, since the Arsenal and munitions factories had fallen into the hands of the rebels. Khabalov asked the commandant of Kronstadt, Admiral A. Kurosh, to send reinforcements, and if not,

⁷⁷ Kutepov 1934, pp. 164–9.

⁷⁸ Martynov 1927, p. 103; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 196. According to Tugan-Baranovskii, they counted 19 to 20 companies, several dozen squadrons, and 12 artillery pieces, with shells. Tugan-Baranovskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 119.

at least ammunition. But the admiral refused; because of the imminent danger of Kronstadt sailors rebelling in response to the uprising in Petrograd he could not afford to comply with any of Khabalov's requests.⁷⁹ Thus, all Khabalov could do was hold on until reinforcement troops arrived from the front.

The situation, however, was not as hopeless in early afternoon as Khabalov believed. The uprising of the soldiers was confined only to the Volynskii, Preobrazhenskii, Lithuanian Regiments, Sixth Sapper Battalion, and the Armoured Car Division. Most of the other units still remained in the barracks, although they were reluctant to support the government. Kutepov's forces maintained cohesion in Liteinyi. The Petropavlovsk Fortress had not yet fallen to the rebels and could easily have become the stronghold of the loyal troops. In the city there were many pockets of loyal forces. The area surrounded by the Winter Palace, the General Staff, the Admiralty, and the *gradonachal'stvo* was most secure under the protection of loyal forces, which assembled in support of the government. Hotel Astoria, the ministry of agriculture, and Mariinskii Palace on Mariinskaia Square were also protected by a small detachment and many officers who had fled to the Astoria. The Department of Police on the Fontanka held off the insurgents' attack. The training detachment of Finland Regiment, consisting of seventy soldiers led by five officers, controlled the Tuchkov, Birzha, and Palace bridges, thereby isolating Vasilievskii Island from the insurgents. The soldiers of the Keksholm Regiment occupied the insurance company, Zhizn', at the corner of Moika and the Kriukov Canal. Installing a machine gun on the window, they controlled the area near Theatre Square. As Leiberov states, with better communication and better leadership, these forces could have become mobilised against the revolution.⁸⁰ But the panicked commanding authority never attempted to connect the loyal forces. Khabalov contemplated dispatching a detachment under the command of either Zankevich or Mikhail'chenko to the Vyborg District to establish a connection with the still resisting Moscow Regiment, but he abandoned this idea in view of the lack of ammunition.⁸¹

After assembling the loyal forces in the Palace Square, however, Khabalov refused to take any offensive actions against the rebels. The only action Khabalov took was to request reinforcements from the front. He made this request in his telegram dispatched at 12:10 p.m. to the Stavka.⁸² Although

79 Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1, pp. 200–1.

80 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 440.

81 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 68.

82 Telegram of Khabalov to the tsar, no. 56, Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a, p. 8.

Khabalov gave assurances that he was taking 'all measures necessary to suppress the rebellion', the request for reinforcements indicated the seriousness of the situation. An hour later, however, Beliaev dispatched the following telegram to Alekseev:

The disturbances which began in some army units from the morning are vigorously and energetically being suppressed by companies and battalions remaining faithful to their duty. It has not been successful so far to suppress the rebellion, but I am firmly convinced of the rapid approach of tranquillity, the achievement for which merciless measures are being taken. The government is maintaining complete calm.⁸³

In the light of the rapid expansion of anarchy and the constant deterioration of the government's resistance, one can only conclude that Beliaev's estimation of the situation was outrageously far from reality. His telegram, contradicting the urgency in Khabalov's telegram, greatly contributed to the delay of action on the part of the military leaders.

Council of Ministers Reacts to the Insurrection

While the military authorities in Petrograd revealed their incompetency, the reaction of the cabinet members to the insurrection demonstrated an even more ignominious irrelevancy. War Minister Beliaev received the news of the insurrection at 8:30 in the morning and immediately relayed it to Golitsyn. The cabinet members gathered at Golitsyn's apartment on Mokhovaia Street, off Liteinyi, and exchanged their observations and impressions. No sense of urgency was felt in the discussion.⁸⁴ Faced with the rapid deterioration of the situation, however, the Council of Ministers met for the second time in the afternoon, this time officially, at Golitsyn's apartment. It decided to declare an emergency situation, placed Petrograd under martial law, and transferred all the power temporarily to the military command. About three o'clock in the afternoon Khabalov appeared at Golitsyn's request to brief the cabinet members. Khabalov's performance did not inspire the confidence of the ministers. Beliaev noted: 'His hands were trembling; apparently he lost the balance neces-

83 Telegram of Beliaev to Alekseev, no. 196, *ibid.*

84 Deposition of Golitsyn, Padenie 1924, vol. 2, p. 263. For the activities of the Council of Ministers on this day, see Kulikov 2014a, pp. 180–2.

sary for providing leadership at such a serious moment'. After Khabalov retired, Golitsyn asked Beliaev to visit the *gradonachal'stvo* to see to it that military authorities should take decisive measures against the rebels. When Beliaev went to the *gradonachal'stvo* at four o'clock and received reports from Colonel Mikhail'chenko and other officers, he found an appalling situation; he realised that there was 'complete absence of ideas, insufficient initiative of policies'.⁸⁵ The war minister immediately tried to rectify the situation by interfering in the commanding authority. He formally dismissed Chebykin and appointed Colonel M.I. Zankevich, chief of the Petrograd General Staff, commander of troops in Petrograd. This appointment was surprising to many General Staff officers, since he was considered to be 'on the far left', and close to Guchkov. Clearly, he accepted this appointment out of duty, not out of convictions.⁸⁶ He did not have the heart to suppress the insurgents and he would eventually betray the cause and turn to the side of the revolution. Moreover, this appointment created utter confusion. Khabalov felt that his command was undercut by Beliaev's meddling, while Zankevich set out to make his own plans after inspecting the loyal troops gathered at the Palace Square. No one knew any longer who had ultimate authority and Khabalov, Zankevich, and Beliaev kept issuing conflicting orders.⁸⁷

In the evening, around seven o'clock, the Council of Ministers held what turned out to be the last meeting of the tsar's cabinet. Golitsyn's apartment was no longer safe, and the ministers moved to Mariinskii Palace. *Gradonachal'nik* Balk asked for permission of the Council of Ministers to lead the police to Tsarskoe Selo to protect the imperial palace. His request sounded to most of the ministers like a request for desertion. Protopopov asked Balk why he had not turned to Khabalov with the request – the ultimate authority for security matters. Balk replied that Khabalov was nowhere to be found. Protopopov ordered Balk to remain in the city with the police, which had by this time completely disintegrated.⁸⁸

The Council of Ministers decided to send the tsar a telegram requesting the formation of a dictatorship headed by a popular general, a change of composition of the cabinet, including the dismissal of Protopopov, and a negotiated settlement with the Duma. This proposal roughly corresponded to what Rodzi-

85 Deposition of Beliaev, *ibid.*, pp. 239–40; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 114.

86 Tugan-Baranovskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 119.

87 Deposition of Pertsov, quoted in Martynov 1927, p. 104; Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1, pp. 201–3; Deposition of Beliaev, Padenie 1924, vol. 2, pp. 230, 239–40; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 70.

88 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, ll. 177–8.

anko had proposed in his last two telegrams to the tsar. Finance Minister Bark argued that since there was no time to wait for the tsar's answer, Golitsyn should exercise his prerogatives as chairman of the Council of Ministers, and act accordingly. It was decided to delegate all authority to the chairman of the Council of Ministers temporarily and to force Protopopov to resign on the pretext of his 'illness'.⁸⁹

During the meeting they were told that the insurgents had set on fire Protopopov's apartment on Fontanka and that his wife had only been saved at the last minute by one of the servants. All the ministers expressed sympathy, but it did not prevent them from requesting his resignation. Golitsyn asked him 'to make a sacrifice'. Protopopov finally accepted his resignation. The ministers then asked Protopopov to leave Mariinskii Palace immediately for fear that his presence might endanger their own safety. To this request Protopopov replied: 'It remains only for me to shoot myself'. But despite this bravado to his colleagues who threw him under the bus, he did not commit suicide; escorted by his bodyguard, he went to the state controller's building, and slept overnight in the servants' quarters.⁹⁰

Less than twenty-four hours after handing the Duma the imperial decree of prorogation, Golitsyn's government resigned. The chairman of the Council of Ministers dispatched a telegram to the tsar, submitting the resignation of his cabinet and requesting the formation of a dictatorship in Petrograd. He made this decision, it appears, under the pressure of Grand Dukes Mikhail Aleksandrovich and Kirill Vladimirovich. Rodzianko also came to Mariinskii Palace to press Golitsyn for the formation of a ministry of confidence. While rejecting the Duma chairman's demand, Golitsyn suggested the formation of a temporary dictatorship under the regency of Grand Duke Mikhail. Mikhail's plea to establish a dictatorship was, however, tersely rejected by Nicholas.⁹¹

Khabalov Moves the Loyal Troops to the Admiralty

By evening the area under the control of the loyal troops had shrunk further. The government held a small area surrounded by the *gradonachal'stvo*, the Admiralty, the Winter Palace, Palace Square and the General Staff. Also Mariinskaia Square was still secure and the Petropavlovsk Fortress remained

89 Ibid., I, 178; Kulikov 2014a, pp. 181–2.

90 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, ll. 178–79; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 448.

91 See Chapter 22.

untouched by the insurgents. But the Department of Police was completely surrounded by insurgents by two o'clock in the afternoon. The telephone station on Morskaia Street was heavily guarded by government troops. When the insurgents assembled on Morskaia and Kirpichnyi Lane, the loyal troops showered machine gun fires upon them. At midnight a detachment of insurgent workers and students sneaked into the building, and overcoming resistance, succeeded in stopping all telephone operation. Students of the Military Automobile School took part in this attack, and among the attackers was young poet V. Maiakovskii (Mayakovsky), who served in the Military Automobile School.⁹² The training detachment of the Finland Regiment securely guarded the Birzha, Tuchkov and Palace bridges, thereby continuing to isolate Vasilievskii Island from the revolution. By evening, however, armed insurgents attacked the troops guarding Tuchkov Bridge. The loyal troops put up a furious resistance, but, faced with endless waves of insurgents, they finally withdrew. The isolation of Vasilievskii Island was broken.⁹³ Gradually pessimism pervaded headquarters. Balk noted:

The number of officers gathering in the *gradonachal'stvo* became greater and greater. The atmosphere was depressing. The agony of the government had begun. Sobbing started. A captain of the Keksholm Regiment wept hysterically; its training detachment had just refused to carry out his orders.⁹⁴

With the loyal troops so few, Khabalov deemed it necessary to withdraw them from the Palace Square, judging that they would be vulnerable to attack from all directions. He then called a meeting and proposed: (1) to move headquarters to the Admiralty, where the loyal troops could utilise the large space in front of it; (2) to transfer headquarters and the loyal troops to the Winter Palace and to resist to the last soldier for the preservation of monarchy; and (3) to flee from Petrograd to Tsarskoe Selo and to wait for the arrival of the reinforcements.⁹⁵ Khabalov supported the first proposal. Although Zankevich advocated the second, he was overruled. At nine o'clock the troops began to move from Palace Square to the Admiralty, singing 'God Save the Tsar'. Infantry occupied the corridors and lobby, while machine gunners prepared their guns at the

92 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, pp. 454, 455; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 195.

93 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 455.

94 Balk (Hoover), p. 11.

95 Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie* 1924, vol. 1, p. 202; Akaemov 1917, p. xxiv.

windows of the upper floors. The cavalry were assigned to the barracks of the Mounted Guard Regiment of Morskaia Street.⁹⁶

Under the circumstances the Admiralty gave the loyal troops the best protection with the large open space of the Aleksandr Garden in front and the Neva at the back. In addition, three main streets issued from the Admiralty to three major railway stations – Nikolaevskii, Tsarskoe Selo, and Warsaw Stations – where the reinforcement troops were expected to arrive.⁹⁷

Apparently unable to comprehend that the government troops were surrounded by hostile rebels, Beliaev ordered Khabalov to issue a declaration to the populace proclaiming the entire city of Petrograd to be in a state of siege and announcing the dismissal of Protopopov. Beliaev had this proclamation printed in the Admiralty. The unfortunate task of posting the copies of the proclamation throughout the city fell on Balk, who, realising the ridiculousness of the assignment, declared that he would not carry out this order without heavy protection and glue and brushes, neither of which the government possessed. It was decided to throw them in the streets wherever possible.⁹⁸ More than a thousand copies of this proclamation were printed, but since it was impossible to drive the government automobiles in the city occupied by the insurgents, only a few copies were thrown in Aleksandr Garden in front of the Admiralty. Beliaev's obsession with issuing orders did not stop. He wanted Khabalov to impose a curfew on the populace. Khabalov ignored his request. M.I. Tiazhel'nikov (Chief of Staff of the Petrograd Military District) and other officers saw Beliaev composing a telegram to be dispatched to the Stavka, in which he described the situation in Petrograd as 'disturbing'. The officers shook their heads, questioning the sanity of the war minister.⁹⁹

This evening Khabalov dispatched a telegram to the Stavka, in which for the first time since the outbreak of the insurrection, he outlined the total disaster of the government troops: 'I implore you to report to His Majesty the Emperor that I could not fulfil the order of restoring order in the capital ... By evening the rebels occupied considerable parts of the capital'.¹⁰⁰ The telegram, which

96 Martynov 1927, p. 106; Balk (Hoover), p. 12; Tugan-Baranovskii interview, Layndres 2013, p. 119.

97 Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1, pp. 202–3; Burdzhhalov 1967, p. 198.

98 Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1, p. 207; Akaemov 1917, p. xxviii; Balk (Hoover), p. 14.

99 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 114.

100 Telegram of Khabalov to Alekseev, no telegram number, Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a, pp. 14–15.

should have been written much earlier, brought a serious shock to the Stavka when it arrived there at 12:55 a.m. on 28 February.

A Tragicomedy between the Winter Palace and the Admiralty

Nothing would reveal more blatantly the ineptitude of the military authorities than their treatment of the soldiers who came to the support of the government. They had been waiting for action for several hours without any food or any clear indication of leadership. Their complaints became increasingly vociferous. The units of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment, which maintained loyalty to the government without joining the insurrection, were kept standing in the Palace Square for hours at 11 degrees Celsius below zero or 11 degrees Fahrenheit. Some officers of the General Staff wondered why Khabarov was turning them into revolutionaries by freezing them.¹⁰¹ The companies of Pavlovskii Regiment deserted in disgust. Colonel Zankevich inspected the troops assembled in the Admiralty and discovered that even the soldiers of the Izmailovskii Regiment, whom he trusted most, were wavering. At eleven o'clock Zankevich ordered the loyal troops to move to the Winter Palace. The reasons for this unexpected move remained unknown; it could be that, sensing the pessimistic mood among the soldiers, Zankevich tried to boost morale by appealing for a heroic last struggle in the emperor's palace. Zankevich's order, however, further alienated the loyal troops. The soldiers of Preobrazhenskii Regiment slipped into darkness and went back to their barracks. The only troops remaining for the government were three companies of the Izmailovskii Regiment, one company of Eger Regiment, one company of the Rifle Regiment, two batteries of the Artillery Division, and one machine-gun company – altogether 1,500 to 2,000 soldiers including the remainders of the police and gendarmes, with 12 guns, 40 machine guns, and a small number of cartridges.¹⁰²

The soldiers who still remained faithful to their oaths of allegiance were humiliated once more at the Winter Palace. As the tired, dirty soldiers arrived at the palace and prepared for bivouac, the palace commandant, General

101 Tugan-Baranovskii interview, Lyandres 2014, p. 118.

102 Deposition of Khabalov, Padenie 1924, vol. 1, p. 203; Burdzhhalov 1967, p. 198; Tugan-Baranovskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 121. According to Burdzhhalov, the number of soldiers shrunk to 600. For the movement of the companies of the Izmailovskii Regiment, which were ordered to report to the Admiralty, see Ioffe 1987, pp. 40–7. Ioffe uses the memoir of Colonel P.V. Danil'chenko, commander of the Izmailovskii Battalion, and his assistant Colonel B.V. Fomin.

V.A. Komarov, was shocked at the appalling scene. How dare these dirty soldiers with strong body odour invade the tsar's palace? The immaculately shining floor was blemished with dirt from the soldiers' boots. The building and furniture might be damaged if a battle were to be engaged here. General Komarov scurried around, fuming and complaining about this blasphemous situation, determined to kick the soldiers out. He found a sympathetic ear in Khabalov, but Zankevich stubbornly refused to evacuate.¹⁰³ Though grumbling, Komarov had no choice but to give the troops temporary permission to stay. Shortly after midnight an automobile brought Beliaev and Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich to the Winter Palace. The soldiers who had felt uncomfortable after Komarov's outburst enthusiastically welcomed the grand duke who, they believed, courageously came to risk his life with common soldiers for the defence of the monarchy. Actually, Mikhail's visit to the Winter Palace was not motivated by such heroism. After meeting with Rodzianko and Golitsyn and offering to help his brother Nicholas in vain, it became too late for him to return to Gatchina. The safest place to spend the night happened to be the Winter Palace. Coldly ignoring the cheering soldiers, Mikhail hurriedly retired to his room without a word of greeting. Immediately Komarov sought an audience and bitterly complained about the soldiers' presence. Wholeheartedly agreeing with Komarov, Mikhail summoned Beliaev and Khabalov and ordered them to evacuate the soldiers from the palace immediately.¹⁰⁴

Khabalov, Beliaev, and Zankevich discussed where to move the troops. The Petropavlovsk Fortress was a possibility but crossing the bridge now occupied by insurgents was out of the question, particularly when they did not have much confidence in the reliability of their own troops. Finally, they decided to return to the Admiralty again.¹⁰⁵ This decision outraged the soldiers who had exuberantly welcomed the grand duke only a few hours before. They naturally felt that they were being 'kicked out like dogs' by the person they thought they were defending. To add insult to injury, the troops were ordered to march boldly from the Winter Palace to Senate Square around the Admiralty, instead of simply crossing the street, to show the strength and determination of the loyal troops.¹⁰⁶ This was too much for the hungry and angry troops who had faithfully fulfilled their duty. Soldier after soldier deserted his position; some simply returned to their barracks, and others, including even some gendarmes,

103 Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie* 1924, vol. 1, p. 203; Balk (Hoover), p. 14; Martynov 1927, pp. 107–8.

104 Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie* 1924, vol. 1, p. 203; Balk (Hoover), p. 14.

105 Balk (Hoover), p. 15; Akaemov 1917, p. xxix; Ioffe 1987, p. 47.

106 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 446; Ioffe 1987, pp. 45–6.

marched to the Duma with red armbands on the sleeves of their overcoats. Colonel Mikhail'chenko, disgusted and considering that his duty was over, deserted his position, and sought 'medical assistance' in the field hospital. The loyal troops shrank to only four companies with very few cartridges, almost no food, and two artillery guns.¹⁰⁷ Without firing a shot at the insurgents and without encountering attack by insurgents, the loyal troops were reduced to zero. Zankevich noted:

There was no confrontation whatever with the [insurgent] troops or the people. I had the impression that by the evening of February 27 all the commanding personnel came to the conclusion that any struggle with the revolution would be hopeless.¹⁰⁸

Exhausted and broken-hearted, Khabalov and Balk sat in silence at a large table in a room on the third floor of the Admiralty and waited for the representatives of the new government to appear for their arrest.

Khabarov's Last Telegram to the Savka

During the night the emperor dismissed Khabalov as the commander of the Petrograd Military District, and appointed General N.I. Ivanov as military dictator in Petrograd. To obtain the information necessary for his assigned operation against the insurgents, Ivanov asked Khabalov in a telegram from Mogilev a series of questions. The reply given by Khabalov revealed the extent of the collapse of the loyal troops in Petrograd. Almost all army units, with the exception of a few companies remaining in the Admiralty, had either joined the insurrection or remained neutral. All the railway stations had fallen to the insurgents. With the exception of the Admiralty all the city was controlled by the insurgents, or at least Khabalov could not establish contact with other parts of the city. All police forces had disintegrated. The insurgents had started arresting ministers. All the weapons, artillery and military supplies went into the hands of the insurgents. With the exception of the chief of staff near the Admiralty, Khabalov had established no contact with other military forces and staff.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie 1924*, vol. 1, p. 204.; Ioffe 1987, p. 48.

¹⁰⁸ GARF, f. ChSK, d. 460, l. 114.

¹⁰⁹ Khabarov to Ivanov, no telegram number given, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 20–1.

However, this pessimistic picture reflected Khabalov's psychological state more than the real relationship between the loyal and the revolutionary forces. As we shall see in the next chapters, while Khabalov was busily moving his troops back and forth between the Admiralty and the Winter Palace, expecting an all-out attack from the insurgents, the revolutionary leaders were frightened at the prospect of counterattack by Khabalov's troops. Officers, including Zankovich, deserted their posts one by one, and moved to the General Staff as a safe haven. Beliaev also came, but left. As he was leaving, he flipped his epaulets over to hide his identity. Walking with his adjutant in front and another behind, he returned to the house of the war ministry at Moika. From there, he sought to hide in an officer's apartment, but no one was willing to hide him. The former war minister was now a hunted man.¹¹⁰

Disintegration of the loyal troops meant the immediate collapse of the cabinet. As the ministers in Mariinskii Palace learned that the insurgents were approaching the palace, in spite of their decorations, medals and high ranks, the primitive instinct of survival was the only faculty they could muster. Someone who thought that the insurgents' attack had begun in panic turned off all the lights of the palace, but when this news turned out to be false and the lights were turned back on, some members of the cabinet found themselves under the table, and glanced at each other with embarrassment. Two other ministers hid themselves in a dark room of the court couriers.¹¹¹ There was no dignity or heroism in the last scene of the dying regime.

After leaving Mariinskii Palace, Protopopov and his bodyguard were walking along the Moika, looking for a safe place to spend the night. Protopopov saw Prince Shakhovskoi, minister of trade and industry, walking on the other side of the street from the opposite direction, his face covered with the collar of his overcoat. The two ministers passed by without exchanging a glance, and pretended not to recognise each other.¹¹²

At midnight, the arrests of the ministers began. The insurrection had triumphed in Petrograd. Throughout the night, crowds were running in the streets, waving red flags and singing revolutionary songs, while the sky was aglow from the burning buildings.

The insurrection had triumphed in Petrograd. But the revolution was not won yet. Tsar Nicholas was alive and well in Mogilev, determined to crush the incipient revolution in the capital.

110 Tugan-Baranovskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 121.

111 Rodzianko 1922, p. 58.

112 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, 180.

PART 4

The Petrograd Soviet and the Duma Committee



The Formation of the Petrograd Soviet

Tauride Palace as the Centre of the Revolution

The sudden explosion of the soldiers' rising on 27 February completely destroyed the tsarist administrative network in Petrograd. The 'former' ministers and generals now became fugitives from the triumphant insurgents. Yet, even though the rebels took the capital into their hands with unexpected ease, they had no idea of what to do next. Suddenly, at the height of the intoxication of liberation, fear chilled their passions. The rumour spread that counterrevolutionary troops sent by Nicholas II were approaching the capital from the front. While the soldiers had shaken off the chains of military discipline, they found no revolutionary authorities to give them direction. Soldiers who had broken their oaths to the tsar now sought an institution that would sanction their actions. The Duma, which had spearheaded the attack on the government from its rostrum, appeared to the masses of soldiers to be the institution to absolve them from the 'crimes' they had just committed. The cry: 'To the Tauride Palace!' spread from soldier to soldier.¹

The success of the insurrection also meant broadening the basis of the mass movement. The leadership that had provided the driving force in the strikes and the demonstrations before 27 February quickly eroded once the rebellion expanded beyond the confines of the workers' movement. The soldiers who revolted suddenly became the main actors in the insurgency. How to organise these insurgent soldiers became the crucial issue that would determine the fate of the revolution. Furthermore, for the first time since 23 February many private citizens joined the political movement, attacking police stations and prisons, or just going out to the streets to greet the soldiers. The leaders of the workers' movement could not extend their effectiveness to the newcomers. The left-wing socialists led by the Bolsheviks and Mezhrailonsy, trying to divert the massive support for the Duma as the centre of the movement, appealed to the insurgents to establish Finland Station in the Vyborg District as a centre. This attempt, however, went unheeded; workers and even the Bolsheviks themselves eventually joined the irresistible current flowing to the Tauride

1 Burdzhakov 1967, p. 202.

Palace. By early afternoon on 27 February, the Tauride Palace became the centre of the revolution.

When the soldiers' boots stepped onto the carpeted floor of the palace built by Catherine the Great for one of her lovers, Potemkin, two groups were responding to the events outside – the Duma leaders and the socialist leaders. From the former there emerged a Provisional Committee of the State Duma (the Duma Committee), while the socialists created the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies, to be renamed the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on 1 March. Thus two conflicting authorities came into being. And it was during the first few days of the February Revolution that the two authorities established their ambivalent relationship of cooperation and competition, a relationship that lasted basically until September of this turbulent year.

From the point of view of revolutionary leadership during the February insurrection, two characteristics stand out: first, the movement had no leadership strong enough to organise the masses into some kind of revolutionary power. Second, the top leaders of the revolutionary parties took little part in the insurrection. The creation of the Petrograd Soviet might appear to have finally closed the gap between the masses and the revolutionary leaders. The insurrection seemed, on the surface, to have finally found a voice to dictate its will. Actually, however, the gap between the masses and the leaders was never bridged. The Petrograd Soviet, like Janus, had two faces: one face expressing the long suppressed desires of the masses for the destruction of the existing system and the other representing the revolutionary intelligentsia, who desired to support the establishment of the government formed by the bourgeoisie. If one were to take a picture of these two faces, they would remain like a double-exposed photograph, never merging into one clear image.

Revolutionary Parties and the Soviet after the 1905 Revolution

As Oskar Anweiler states, despite its short-lived existence, the St. Petersburg Soviet of 1905 had left a strong revolutionary tradition that was clearly imprinted on the consciousness of St. Petersburg workers.² Although the revolutionary parties failed to incorporate the notion of the soviet integrally into their revolutionary programmes after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution, they never-

² Anweiler 1958, p. 127.

theless left the possibility of its recreation open. In fact, in February 1917, they picked up where they had left off in 1905.

The creation of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies in major industrial cities, particularly in St. Petersburg, in the 1905 Revolution necessitated the evaluation by the revolutionary parties of the viability of this organ in the context of their overall revolutionary theory. The Mensheviks assumed that the first revolution in Russia should be bourgeois-democratic, and that the bourgeoisie, not the proletariat, should play the leading role. At this stage, the Social Democrats should not join a bourgeois government, let alone seize power, but rather remain 'the party of the extreme opposition', and exert pressure from outside to insure the completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution. This policy, however, did not preclude the possibility of the workers establishing 'partial, episodic seizures of power' and forming 'a revolutionary self-government'.³ Such 'revolutionary self-government' should serve as part of a network of elected organs to be created by all classes of society for the purpose of convening an all-Russian constituent assembly. The Mensheviks also called for the establishment of the All-Russian Workers' Congress to represent the workers' separate interests as equal representative organisations of other social classes. According to their programme, the factory workers would elect their deputies to the city workers' congresses, which in turn would send their deputies to the All-Russian Workers' Congress.⁴ The Menshevik notion of revolutionary government and the role of the workers in it left many ambiguities. Would not a revolutionary self-government undermine the authority of the central government? Would it be possible for the workers to carry out a struggle against the remnants of tsarism, on the one hand, and to refrain from joining the central government, on the other? These ambiguities, which had provoked merely an academic interest, suddenly bore serious and practical consequences after the February Revolution.⁵

The creation of the soviets in 1905 compelled the Mensheviks to apply the notions of revolutionary self-government and of the All-Russian Workers' Congress in concrete situations. They conceived of the soviet as the embodiment of a revolutionary self-government as well as a transitional institution through which their goal of the All-Russian Workers' Congress would ultimately emerge. They never envisaged the soviet as a revolutionary power replacing the tsarist regime. This power could be organised only by a constituent assembly that

3 Schwarz 1967, p. 8. Resolution adopted in the Menshevik conference held in Geneva in April/May 1905, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 12.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

5 Anweiler 1958, p. 85; Schwarz 1967, p. 13.

would comprise all classes of the population, not by the soviet, which was an exclusive class organisation restricted to the workers.⁶

In contrast to the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks rejected the revolutionary role assigned to the bourgeoisie. They maintained that after the overthrow of the tsarist regime a provisional revolutionary government composed of the proletariat and the peasantry should establish a dictatorship. Strongly opposing the Menshevik concept of a revolutionary self-government, Lenin called for the establishment of revolutionary committees. Unlike the Mensheviks' notion of revolutionary self-government as a spontaneous movement, Lenin's revolutionary committees would be organised under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party and their task would be directly connected with an armed insurrection.⁷ The Bolshevik's elitism and mistrust of the 'spontaneity' of the workers' movement were clearly reflected in their attitude toward the soviets in 1905. As long as the Petersburg Soviet functioned as a strike committee, the Bolsheviks supported it, but after the strike was over, the Bolshevik organisation in St. Petersburg was hostile toward the soviet. The central issue was the relationship between the party and the spontaneous mass movement. The Bolsheviks' representative to the Executive Committee of the Petersburg Soviet, Kunniants (Radin), declared that the existence of the soviet outside of Social Democracy was 'harmful' and 'a menace to the free development of the class movement toward Social Democracy'. The Party Central Committee demanded that the soviet accept the programme of the party or, if it refused, the Bolsheviks would either leave the soviet entirely or remain in it only to expose 'the absurdity of such political leadership'.⁸

Unlike the Petersburg Bolsheviks, however, Lenin sensed the usefulness of the soviet as an organisation that could draw a broader spectrum of the working class into the political struggle. He advanced this view for the first time in an article entitled 'Our Tasks and the Soviet of Workers' Deputies' written in November 1905. Lenin accepted the utility of the soviet to advance the political struggle, but regarded the soviet as an instrument of insurrection. He then characterised the soviet as an 'embryo of a provisional revolutionary government'.⁹

Lenin's formulation, however, left many ambiguities concerning both the relationship between the soviet and a provisional revolutionary government and that between the soviet and the party. Should the soviet be considered

6 See Anweiler 1958, pp. 86–9.

7 Ibid., pp. 92–3.

8 Schwarz 1967, pp. 180, 183–4.

9 Lenin 1976, pp. 61, 63–4.

a revolutionary government as such, or should it be a transitional institution merely to create a provisional revolutionary government? On the one hand, he recognised the importance of drawing broader sections of the population into the soviet, advocating the inclusion of not only the workers but also the sailors, soldiers, peasants and even the 'revolutionary bourgeois intelligentsia'. On the other hand, he added: 'This will be a temporary alliance for clearly defined, immediate practical tasks. The independent and uncompromising Russian Social Democratic Labour party will unbendingly stand for the still more important, fundamental interests of the socialist proletariat and its still more important ultimate aims'.¹⁰ The Bolshevik approach to the soviet after the February Revolution was clearly formulated in this article. The soviet should be exploited to integrate the soldiers, peasants and the radical bourgeois intelligentsia into political struggle; the soviet should serve as an instrument of insurrection; and finally when the Soviet power was established, the Bolsheviks would carry out the programmes independently, uncompromisingly and unbendingly.

It was Trotskii who advanced the most positive evaluation of the revolutionary potentialities of the soviet. In fact, his concept of the soviet was central to his theory of permanent revolution. Free from the mistrust of the spontaneity of the mass movement and directly involved in the Petersburg Soviet as its vice-chairman, Trotskii came to regard the soviet, without reservations and qualifications, as the most direct, genuine form of democracy. And yet Trotskii went further than his fellow Mensheviks, who could not see in the soviet anything but an organisational adjunct to formal, legal institutions. He arrived at the same conclusion as Lenin, only in a more direct and unqualified manner, that the soviet should be an organ of insurrection as well as the provisional revolutionary government charged with the task of fulfilling a bourgeois-democratic revolution.¹¹

The Socialist Revolutionary party did not develop a consistent policy toward the soviet. The Party Congress held in December 1905 did not even mention a soviet. One can see, however, the basic attitude of the SRS in the leaflet issued by its Central Executive Committee, after the dissolution of the First Duma. In this leaflet, the SRS appealed to the workers to create an interparty, militant soviet of workers' deputies for the general leadership of the struggle among the workers. It should be noted that the SRS envisioned the soviet merely as a centre of the various revolutionary forces. In 1906, however, a radical left

10 Ibid., p. 66.

11 Anweiler 1958, pp. 108–9; Isaac Deutscher 1954, pp. 149, 163–8.

wing of the SR party, together with the anarchists, advanced a slogan calling for the establishment of soviet communes (*kommunal'nye sovety*) in cities and villages. The union of these soviets would proclaim a dictatorship and organise a provisional revolutionary government.¹²

Call for the Creation of a Soviet Revived in 1915

The idea of its creation was suddenly revived during the war. The first call for a soviet came from the Socialist Revolutionaries after the Ivanovo massacre in August 1915. According to an Okhrana report, the Socialist Revolutionaries adopted a slogan to establish a soviet of workers' deputies from the representatives of the factory committees. This should include all the representatives of the Socialist parties and should strive for the convocation of a constituent assembly. The Mensheviks also supported the creation of the soviet during the election campaign for the Workers' Group in the War Industries Committee. They appealed to the workers to take advantage of all means to advance the interests of the proletariat, and appealed to the workers to create a workers' committee for assistance to the evacuees, trade unions, cooperatives, the soviet of workers' deputies, and the Workers' Congress.¹³ To the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries the soviet was a coordinating body of the workers' representatives for the overall leadership of the workers' movement, an inter-party organisation to include all the socialist parties.

The Bolsheviks also revived the notion of the creation of the soviet in the summer and autumn of 1915. When the Petersburg Committee discussed at the end of August how to react to the election of the Workers' Group, it decided to transform the election campaign into an election to a soviet of workers' deputies for the purpose of 'organising a provisional revolutionary government to replace the existing institutions of the state power'. This revolutionary power was to prepare for the convocation of an All Russian Constituent Assembly, which would abolish the monarchy and establish a democratic republic. The election campaign was to be conducted under the leadership of the Bolsheviks.¹⁴ The Petersburg Committee once again called for the creation of the soviet during the general strike in September 1915.¹⁵ The Bolsheviks' notion echoed the basic ideas enunciated by Lenin in 1905.

12 Anweiler 1958, pp. 113–16.

13 GARF, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1058, ll. 42, 84.

14 Tiutiukin 1972, p. 209; RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1059, ll. 4, 5.

15 Leiberov 1963a, p. 174; Leiberov 1972, pp. 485–6; RGIA, f. 1405, op. 530, d. 1059, ll. 70–1.

Nevertheless, that was not good enough for Lenin. The dogmatic leader criticised the Petersburg Committee's position. In his article 'Several Theses', written in October, Lenin insisted that 'the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and similar institutions should be viewed as an organ of insurrection and as an organ of the revolutionary power', and that the slogan of the soviet should be raised only 'in connection with an insurrection'. The Russian Bureau of the Central Committee, restored by Shliapnikov, also opposed the Petersburg Committee's slogan. Ignoring the admonishments coming from the great leader in Zurich, however, the Petersburg Committee continued its support for the creation of the soviet until November.¹⁶

Call for the Soviet after January 1917

Although after the autumn of 1915 the revolutionary parties seem to have dropped the notion of creating the soviet as a practical policy, the soviet as a viable organ to coordinate and lead the workers' strike movement appeared to be alive among the activists. It is reported that when the strike movement was stepped up in January 1917, the idea of creating a soviet was proposed by the sick-fund activists who gathered in the Putilov Factory.¹⁷ In fact, the absence of a central coordinating body for the workers' movement in Petrograd continued throughout the war. The Workers' Group was created, but instead of unifying the workers' movement, its creation further contributed to the split of its leadership. The bitter struggle between the Workers' Group and the left socialists (Bolsheviks, left SRS, Mezhraintsy, and Menshevik-Internationalists) for influence on the workers' movement in Petrograd, which continued throughout 1916, may have made the revolutionary leaders less enthusiastic about the creation of the soviet, but the strike movement that developed after 9 January 1917 and culminated in the February Revolution created a totally new situation. The strike was supported by both the Workers' Group and the left socialists, and it reached a segment of the workers that had never before participated in political movement. It was not surprising, therefore, that strike leaders called for the formation of the soviet as a centre of the rapidly developing strike movement.

In addition, the two opposing groups of the workers' movement, the Workers' Group and the left socialists, had a logical reason to welcome the creation of

16 Lenin 1973, vol. 27, p. 49; see the Petersburg Committee's leaflet published in November 1915, in Listovski 1939, vol. 2, pp. 174–5.

17 Zlokazov 1969, p. 28. Zlokazov's source is GARF, f. DPOO, 1917 g., op. 5, d. 630, l. 122.

the soviet, because it provided a missing link in their formulation of policy prior to the February Revolution. The central part of the Workers' Group's policy was the convocation of the All-Russian Workers' Congress, which was never allowed by the tsarist government, and the formation of the soviet would be the first step toward this goal. The soviet as the organisation to protect the workers' interests could exert its influence in the struggle waged jointly with the bourgeoisie against the remnants of feudalism for the creation of a democratic republic. From the left socialists' point of view, the victory of the insurrection in the February Revolution provided them for the first time with the opportunity to raise the question of the soviet in the context of the formation of a revolutionary power. Thus, the Workers' Group and the left socialists attempted to create the soviet during the February Revolution, but the two notions of the soviet were bound to clash in its course.

The Strike Movement after 23 February and the Petrograd Soviet

Although the Petrograd Soviet was not created until 27 February, the appeal for its creation was heard widely in the factories as well as in the streets during the first four days of the strike movement. A fourteen-year-old high-school student, Pavel Slovatinskii, heard this slogan shouted at a rally at Znamenskaia Square on 25 February. A Bolshevik worker, Gordienko, also heard an orator screaming from a lamp post: 'Comrades, the time we were waiting for has finally come! ... Create the workers' district soviets! Draw the representatives of the soldiers into them!'¹⁸ A member of the Mezhraiontsy, Kovnator, also heard the appeal to create a soviet at Znamenskaia Square. Some workers returned to the factory to elect their representatives. The new development was intercepted by the sensitive antennae of the Okhrana agents, one of whom reported: 'The election to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies will take place in the factories, evidently, tomorrow morning. By tomorrow evening the Soviet of Workers' Deputies may already begin its function'. Some factories allegedly elected their delegates – it is reported that the Franco-Russian Factory and Promet elected theirs on 24 February.¹⁹ It is also noted that on 26 February the workers of the Armaturnyi

18 Iurii Trifonov, 'Mal'chik vel dnevnik', *Literatunaia gazeta*, 6 November 1965; I. Gordienko 1957, p. 58.

19 Kovnator 1924, p. 189; Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1918, p. 175; Melancon 2009, pp. 8, 63. The contents of the Okhrana report indicate that the author based his observations on an analysis of the events on 25 February, although the report itself was dated 26 February. Thus, 'tomorrow' should be taken as 26 February rather than 27 February. Zlokazov 1964,

Factory in the Vyborg District elected a Bolshevik worker, P.A. Alekseev, deputy to the Petrograd Soviet. Sukhanov also confirms that the elections had begun on 24 February in some factories. But if there were indeed such elections before 27 February, we have no information as to how these elections were held, who was elected, and if those who were elected continued to serve as their delegates after 27 February.²⁰

Who, then, advanced the slogan for the establishment of the soviet? It is known that the Menshevik-Defencists close to the Duma Mensheviks and the Workers' Group of the Central War Industries Committee had supported this slogan at least by 25 February. According to Skobelev, the delegates from factories came to the Duma pressing for the establishment of the soviet and begging for instructions from the Socialist leaders in the Duma. He adds: 'We made a concrete proposal to them to create the factory centres and factory committees, and prepare for the election to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies from each factory'.²¹ The Menshevik activists, upon the advice of their Duma leaders, invited other Mensheviks to a meeting on 25 February at the office of the Workers' Consumer Cooperatives. Thirty to thirty-five delegates from all districts in Petrograd, in addition to the leaders of the labour and cooperative movement and the Duma deputies, attended this meeting.²² F.A. Cherevanin's proposal to create the Soviet of Workers' Deputies was unanimously approved. The participants decided to use the workers' cooperatives and sick-funds boards in each district as the district centre to which the workers would send their delegates. The Petrograd Union of Workers' Cooperatives would become the all-city centre to coordinate activities. All the participants would return to their districts to inform the factories of this decision. The first meeting of the soviet was to be held on the following day, 26 February. It appears certain that the Mensheviks' decision was the first appeal emanating from a revolutionary organisation that called for the creation of the soviet as a practical, urgent necessity.²³

p. 105, 34; Zlokazov 1969, p. 34. Melancon's claim that 'joint socialists designated the twenty-seventh as the appropriate day' for Soviet election is questionable. Melancon 2009, p. 9.

20 Geroi Oktiabria, vol. 1, p. 63; Sukhanov 1922, p. 35; Tokarev 1976, pp. 21–2.

21 Skobelev 1927, p. 1.

22 N.S. Chkheidze (Menshevik Duma Deputy), F.A. Cherevanin (Menshevik-Defencist), I.G. Volkov and N.Iu. Kapelinskii (both leaders of the cooperative movement in Petrograd) are known to have attended this meeting.

23 'Kak obrazovalsia Petrogradskii Sovet', *Izvestiia Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, no. 155 (27 August 1917), pp. 6–7. The Okhrana agent's report cited above corresponds with the decision taken at this meeting. Sukhanov states: 'The directive of elections originated

Nevertheless, this did not have an immediate effect upon the masses of workers. The police arrested more than half of the participants in that meeting and those who attended another meeting at the office of the Workers' Group of the Central War Industries Committee. Those who escaped arrest may have engaged in propaganda for the creation of the soviet, but the government's brutal suppression of the demonstrators on the following day rendered the creation of the soviet of secondary importance.²⁴

While the Mensheviks took the lead in directing the amorphous desire among the masses for the creation of a centre for the movement and called for the creation of a soviet as such a centre, the left socialists lagged behind the spontaneous initiative of the masses. The Mezhrayontsy considered the adoption of the slogan calling for the soviet to be premature. On 25 February, the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party drafted a leaflet that appealed to the workers to create 'revolutionary committees' for struggle under the guidance of the Bolsheviks, but conspicuous was the absence of any reference to the soviet.²⁵ By calling for the creation of revolutionary committees at the time when the slogan for the soviet was widespread, the Bolsheviks' highest organisation by implication took a negative attitude toward its creation. It also showed that the Russian Bureau had reverted to the parochial position taken by the Petersburg Bolsheviks in 1905 – a position that viewed committees organised by the party instead of the soviet as the main organ of struggle.²⁶

The leaflet composed by the Russian Bureau did not satisfy even the members of the Petersburg Committee. At the meeting held on the evening of 25 February, the committee responded to the cry for the creation of the soviet by deciding to establish factory committees, which would be directed to send

from the initiative meeting of the leaders of the labour movement. This directive was immediately picked up by party organizations and, as is known, was successfully carried out in the factories in the capital during these days'. Sukhanov 1922, pp. 34–5. Sukhanov's contention notwithstanding, documentary evidence is lacking to indicate how widely elections were held on 25 and 26 February and to what extent these elections were the direct results of this 'directive'.

- 24 Wada dismisses any relationship between the appeals for the creation of the soviet at Znamenskaia Square and the Mensheviks' decision. Nevertheless, one cannot completely deny a possible connection. Wada 1968, p. 405. See RGASPI, f. 70, op. 3, d. 559, l. 20, recollections of Voronkov, quoted in Melancon 2009, pp. 8, 62.
- 25 Listovski, vol. 2, p. 250. Also see Shliapnikov 1923a, pp. 284–5; Shliapnikov 1923c, vol. 1, pp. 101–2. This leaflet was issued in the name of the Petersburg Committee, but actually drafted by Shliapnikov.
- 26 Hasegawa 1977, pp. 91–2.

their delegates to the 'Information Bureau' for the guidance of the factory committees. This 'Information Bureau' would be subordinated to the Petersburg Committee and would in the future become the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.²⁷

In this decision the Petersburg Committee specifically mentioned the creation of the soviet, but as something in the distant future rather than as a task of urgent necessity. Moreover, like the Russian Bureau's leaflet, it adopted the position that the party be recognised as the driving force of the revolutionary struggle. By counterposing the factory committees to the soviet, the Petersburg Committee also displayed hostility toward the call for the creation of the soviet initiated by the Mensheviks.²⁸

One can speculate that the idea of the soviet had been deeply rooted in the minds of the Petrograd workers, particularly among the politically conscious, experienced activists. As the strike movement gained momentum, these activists felt the need to create a centre to coordinate activities throughout the city. The slogan was presented to solve practical difficulties stemming from the lack of organisation and cohesion of the strike movement. At this stage no one related it to the problem of power, since the seizure of power was believed to be still a remote possibility. The right socialists rather than left-wing socialists were more successful in responding to the need to create the soviet as the centre of the strike movement.

As I discussed in Chapter 15, the Socialist Information Bureau met in Kerenskii's apartment on 26 February, when the demonstrators were fired upon by the soldiers. Undaunted by the setback, Kerenskii proposed to create the soviet and send the delegates to the Tauride Palace. This was consistent with the Duma socialists' ideas, supported by not only Kerenskii, but also Chkhaidze and Skobelev. They were anxious to unite the workers' strike movement with the liberal opposition to the government, hoping that the massive bloodshed would finally prompt the reluctant liberals to move against the government. Iurenev and Aleksandrovich, representing the radical left, opposed Kerenskii's proposal. According to Melancon, their opposition was not their retreat from the revolutionary offensive, as Kerenskii claims in his memoirs, but rather their rejection of the soviet united with the liberal opposition. Nevertheless, it was Kerenskii's proposal that stole the thunder from the left socialists, and was to play a crucial role in the creation of the Petrograd Soviet.

27 GARF, f. DPOO, op. 5, ch. 57/1917 g., 32; GARF, f. DPOO, d. 341, ch. 57/1917, l. 42; E.K. Bartshtein and L.M. Shalaginova 1962, pp. 111–12. Tokarev cautions about the reliability of the Okhrana report. Tokarev 1976, pp. 19–20.

28 Hasegawa 1977, pp. 92–3.

Call for the Establishment of the Petrograd Soviet: 27 February

The sudden revolutionary upsurge during the February days that culminated in the soldiers' uprising took the leaders of the revolutionary parties by surprise. V.M. Zenzinov, a leader of the SR party, who worked at the time on the editorial board of the SR-oriented legal magazine *Severnnye zapiski*, noted: 'The Revolution struck like lightning from the sky ... Let us be frank: it was a great and joyful event, unexpected even by those of us who had been working toward it for many years and waiting for it always'. Another SR party member, S. Mstislavskii, provides an oft-quoted phrase in his memoirs: 'The revolution caught us, the party men of that time, sleeping like the foolish virgins of the Scriptures'.²⁹ Indeed, the revolutionary leaders were inexperienced, indecisive and at a loss at the crucial moment when their dreams were about to come true. Shliapnikov consistently underestimated the potentialities of the movement that had begun – it never occurred to him that 'this would be the last and decisive battle against tsarism'. Others, like Zenzinov, 'Simply wandered about the streets without plans, going from one street to another, observing the crowds, listening to their conversations'. Iurenev (Mezhraionets) and K.S. Grinevich (Menshevik Internationalist) actually joined the demonstrations and made some attempts to lead the crowds, although their leadership could hardly influence the course of events.³⁰ The actual leaders of the movement were lower level revolutionary activists closely connected with the workers. According to SR worker Mil'chik,

A colossal role was played by the revolutionary party members, organically connected with the crowds. They were an internal, moral inspiration, led the masses, and experienced all the peripeteia of the movement with them. Only the workers and a handful of intelligentsia integrally connected with the workers could be such leaders. Wide circles of the Petrograd intelligentsia were only observers from the sidelines. This resulted from their alienation from the life of the masses.³¹

One of the few leaders who saw beyond the events in the streets was N.N. Sukhanov (Gimmer), an editor of Gor'kii's journal *Letopis'*, who, though

²⁹ Zenzinov, *Delo naroda*, 15 March, 1917; Mstislavskii 1922, p. 12.

³⁰ Sukhanov 1921, p. 35; Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 87; Zenzinov 1953, pp. 200, 201; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 146.

³¹ Mil'chik 1931, p. 84.

he did not officially belong to the party, took a position close to the Menshevik-Internationalists. Convinced that a revolution had started, he began formulating a programme of revolution. He immediately concluded that a government established after the overthrow of tsarism should be a solely bourgeois government, since the 'democracy'³² that was in a state of total disintegration under the autocracy could not effectively govern a nation tormented by war and the destruction of national life resulting from it. Under these conditions the only way to establish a viable governmental power would be to control the state machinery, which would be organised only by the bourgeoisie, since any socialist government would alienate the bureaucracy. Moreover, a socialist government would have to face the task of ending the war immediately, a task that could not be realised in the face of all the other difficulties of internal transformation. In Sukhanov's opinion, it was 'absolutely indispensable to lay the problem of foreign policy temporarily on the shoulders of the bourgeoisie'. To realise this idea, it was necessary to know how other socialists were reacting to the crisis. Sukhanov telephoned N.D. Sokolov, a socialist lawyer, to arrange a meeting of the representatives of different socialist groups on the following day. The meeting called at Sokolov's apartment on 25 February, however, disappointed Sukhanov, since far from being a meeting of the representatives of all the various socialist groups, only a handful of the radical populist intelligentsia gathered there.³³

The victory of the insurrection on 27 February placed the importance of the soviet in a different context. Revolutionary leaders were now faced with the urgent need to create a revolutionary power; and the creation of the soviet became integrally related to the problem of power. Of all the revolutionary leaders it was again the right socialists who made the first move for its establishment, recognising the need to organise the insurgent masses. About noon on 27 February, the insurgents attacked the Kresty Prison and released the political prisoners. Two of the leaders of the Workers' Group of the Central War Industries Committee, K.A. Gvozdev and B.O. Bogdanov, made their way to the Tauride Palace, where other Menshevik leaders had assembled. The Bolshevik V. Zalezskii, a former member of the Petersburg Committee, who

32 An explanation is required here concerning the term democracy and the way it was used at that time. 'Democracy' did not mean what we understand – equal rights for everyone in society, regardless of classes, income and social status, to participate in the political process. 'Democracy' during the Russian Revolution meant the right of the lower class – workers, peasants, soldiers and other classes that had been excluded from the political process – to participate in that process. Thus, 'democracy' excluded the privileged class.

33 Sukhanov 1921, pp. 25, 39.

had just been released from the House of Detention, met Gvozdev and Breido on Liteinyi Bridge on his run to the Vyborg District – a symbolic encounter: some claim that it is a revolutionary myth – where a Bolshevik hurried to the workers' section to join the armed struggle, while the Mensheviks concerned themselves first with the organisation of the insurgents.³⁴

As soon as he learned of the soldiers' insurrection, Kerenskii was determined to exploit the new situation for the overthrow of the government in cooperation with the Duma liberals. According to his memoirs, before he left home for the Tauride Palace, he called 'some of his friends' by phone to go to the barracks and persuade the troops to come to the Duma. Two such 'friends' are identified by historian Andrei Nikolaev as Sokolov and Mstislavskii.³⁵ Kerenskii made use of a network that he had established through the Information Bureau and other workers' organisations to gather information. Every ten or fifteen minutes a new report would reach him.³⁶

The insurgent soldiers began to arrive in the Tauride Palace early in the afternoon. After two o'clock in the afternoon, the private session of the Duma was interrupted by the arrival of masses of insurgent soldiers. Chkhedze, Skobelev and Kerenskii rushed to greet them, and led them inside the palace.³⁷ The arrival of the insurgent soldiers made the task of organising the insurgents the most pressing issue. The socialist Duma Deputies arranged Room 13, a room usually used for the Budget Committee, for the use of the socialist intelligentsia who gathered in the Duma.³⁸ These socialists, predominantly Mensheviks, immediately formed a Provisional Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.³⁹ The members of the Provisional Executive Committee cannot

34 'Kak obranzoval'sia Petrogradskii Sovet', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, 27 August 1917, p. 7; Zalezhsii 1931, pp. 158–9; Zalezhsii 1923, p. 139; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 171–2. Those revolutionary leaders who were liberated from the Kresty could not have met at Liteinyi Bridge, if Zalezhsii was going to Finland Station.

35 Kerensky 1965, p. 194; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 162–3. Not only Kerenskii, but also Miliukov and Nekrasov attempted to appeal to the insurgent soldiers to come to the Duma. Leiberov 1979, p. 239.

36 Kerensky 1965, p. 194.

37 See Chapter 18. Melancon 2009, pp. 13–15; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 184–9.

38 According to Nikolaev, 'someone' approached Kerenskii to provide a room for the Provisional Executive Committee, and he made Room 13 available, obtaining Rodzianko's permission. Nikolaev believes that this 'someone' is Konovalov. If his assertion is correct, it indicates that Rodzianko was not hostile to the creation of the Soviet. See Nikolaev 2005, p. 152. Obolenskii 1988, p. 513.

39 The Russian term is *Vremennyi ispolnitel'nyi komitet*. 'Vremennyi' means both 'temporary' and 'provisional'. The Provisional Committee of the State Duma [*Vremennyi komitet*]

be definitively established, but the following persons seemed to be its members: Chkheidze, Skobelev, Volkov, Kapelinskii, Grinevich, Sokolov, Gvozdev, Bogdanov and Frankorusskii. All except Sokolov, Kapelinskii and Frankorusskii were Mensheviks. This composition included the figures who had advocated the creation of the soviet on 25 February. Later in the afternoon, leaders of the Workers' Group (Gvozdev and Bogdanov), who had been just released from the Kresty, joined the group. The Duma Socialist leaders, Kereneskii, Chkheidze and Skobelev, provided a key role in leading the insurgents to the Tauride Palace. Around two o'clock in the afternoon the Provisional Executive Committee issued an appeal to insurgent workers and soldiers to elect delegates to the soviet.

Citizens! The representatives of the workers, soldiers, and other people of Petrograd, who are meeting in the State Duma, announce that the first meeting of their representatives will be held tonight at seven o'clock in the evening at a room of the State Duma. All troops that took the side of the people immediately elect their own representatives, one person per one company. Factories elect their own deputies, one person per one thousand people. Factories with fewer than a thousand workers elect one deputy from each factory.⁴⁰

It is important to note that these right-socialist leaders took the most decisive initiative to organise the insurgent masses. This was consistent with the policy they had pursued since 25 February, the policy that they had advocated even at the darkest hours of the Bloody Sunday on 26 February, despite the opposition from the radical left. The proclamation twice referred to the State Duma as the location of the Petrograd Soviet. This appeal had enormous influence among the insurgents by giving a definite location as the centre of the insurrection. The designation of the Tauride Palace as the centre of the insurrection had several advantages when compared with the insistence by the left socialists on the Finland Station (which will be discussed in detail later). The Tauride Palace was, of course, the seat of the Duma, the centre of the liberal opposition to the tsarist government, and a place where the socialist deputies had delivered

Gosudarsevennoi dumy], and the Provisional Government [*Vremmnoe pravitel'stvo*] all use 'vremennyi'. For the sake of uniformity, I use 'Provisional' for all these cases rather than 'temporary'.

40 'Vozzvanie Vremennogo ispolnitel'nogo komiteta Soveta rabochikh deputatov k naseleniiu o vyborakh deputatov v Sovet', *Izvestiia Komiteta petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, 27 February 1917, p. 1; Document 2, Petrogradskii soviet 1991, pp. 19–20.

fiery speeches. While Finland Station was in the Vyborg District, the Tauride Palace was near the centre of the city, and, also unlike a railway station, the palace was equipped with assembly halls, many rooms, working telephones and printing facilities. Led by Kerenskii, Skobelev and Chkhaidze, these right socialists played the most decisive role in steering the insurrection to the Tauride Palace.⁴¹

The prescribed election procedures of the workers' deputies followed the pattern of those adopted for the election to the Workers' Group of the War Industries Committee. Although the initiators adopted the name 'the Soviet of Workers' Deputies', the nature of the insurrection demanded the inclusion of the soldiers in this body. Despite the opposition raised by some Menshevik leaders, who wished to keep the soviet purely a representative body of workers, it was practically impossible to ignore the soldiers who provided the insurrection with decisive strength, both in number as well as with their rifles and machine guns. It is also important to note that the proclamation was addressed to 'citizens', not 'comrades', and that it identified them as representatives of not only 'the workers and soldiers', but also of 'other people', indicating that the insurrection had a broader base that went beyond the workers and soldiers.

The appeal was printed on the printing press made available in the Duma and distributed throughout the city. It was also printed in the first issue of *Izvestiia Komiteta zhurnalistsov Petrograda*, the only newspaper that appeared on this day, and which was widely circulated. Since the Duma Committee that was formed late in the afternoon was the body that created this newspaper (see Chapter 18), the Provisional Executive Committee had close relationships with the Duma Committee through Kerenskii, Chkhaidze and Skobelev. Also the editors of the newspaper to be published by the Petrograd Soviet, *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh deputatov*, was given Room 9A, which was used for the Petrograd Telegraph Agency (PTA), where furniture, printing presses and telephones were made available to the editors.⁴² Thus, through the Duma connections, the Provisional Executive Committee obtained an effective means of communication, an enormous advantage over left socialists who had to rely on the existing inefficient underground printing presses. Moreover, the members of the Provisional Committee also took advantage of the legal network of the Central War Industries Committee and the cooperatives to spread inform-

41 Abraham 1984, pp. 131–2; Melancon 1990, p. 267, 331–2, Melancon 2009, p. 13; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 151–2.

42 Nikolaev 2005, p. 153.

ation. Gvozdev, for instance, went from factory to factory in an automobile made available by his liberal colleague in the Central War Industries Committee, Baron G.Kh. Maidel'.⁴³

Left Socialists' Reaction to the Petrograd Soviet

The Provisional Committee's proclamation designated the Tauride Palace as the location of the soviet. It was consistent with the initiators' idea that the State Duma should be the main instrument for the struggle against tsarism. This decision, moreover, well suited the newly developing situation. The insurrection was no longer confined to the workers' strike movement but now the soldiers constituted the most important element in the insurgency. Also the insurrection involved a wide segment of the population and the prestige of the Duma had a great appeal to these newcomers in the political movement. But the proclamation remained totally silent on the nature of the soviet in the context of the problem of power.⁴⁴ The right socialist leaders, who took it for granted that the liberals would form a government, were concerned primarily with organising the revolutionary forces. This assumption, however, was challenged by a small group of radical left socialists, who openly advocated the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government in the form of the soviet. Thus, the two views on the nature of the soviet – that it should be an organisation centre of the insurgents to support the formation of a government in cooperation with the liberals or that it should be an exclusive revolutionary power, composed of only the insurgent workers and soldiers – came into direct conflict as early as 27 February.

Late in the evening of 26 February the Mezhraiontsy issued a leaflet in the name of all left-wing socialists, including the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and the SRS. Describing the events that took place on 26 February relating to the shooting of the demonstrators, the Cossacks' attack on the police and the mutiny of the Pavlovskii Regiment, the leaflet appealed to the workers to continue the struggle. It further called for the 'organisation of illegal strike committees' and the linking of one district to another, and the eventual formation of a Provisional Revolutionary Committee. Put in the context of the disagreement at the Socialist Information Bureau, where Iurenev and Aleksandrovich opposed the formation of a soviet advocated by the right socialists, this leaflet meant

43 Iordanskii 1928, p. 169; Melancon 1990, p. 268; Nikolaev 2005, p. 172.

44 Hasegawa 1977, pp. 95–6; Tokarev 1976, pp. 29–30.

that the left-wing socialists rejected the formation of the soviet, as called by the right-wing socialists, and called for the establishment of a revolutionary government instead that would grow out of the insurrection.⁴⁵

After learning the news of the soldiers' insurrection, the Mezhraiontsy held an emergency meeting at two p.m. in their headquarters in the Moscow District, and unanimously decided to issue a leaflet calling for a general insurrection and the election of workers' and soldiers' representatives to the soviet. This leaflet stated: 'The die is cast. You cannot retreat. You have nowhere to go. In case of defeat a merciless reprisal from the tsarist autocracy will wait for the rebels'.⁴⁶ Another leaflet addressed to the soldiers pointed out that some soldiers were still hesitating to join the revolution, and appealed to the soldiers to go to the State Duma to 'share the joy and the sorrow' with the fellow soldiers.⁴⁷ By this time, the Provisional Executive Committee consisting of the right socialists had issued the leaflet calling for the creation of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and sending the delegates to the Tauride Palace. It was urgent for the Mezhraiontsy and other left-wing socialists to respond to this call for the establishment of the soviet of workers' deputies.

It is likely that the Mezhraiontsy's leaflet that Iurenev mentioned was the leaflet issued in the name of the RSDRP (Russian Social Democratic Workers Party). This leaflet informed the workers that the soldiers had joined the revolution and that the political prisoners had been freed from the Kresty and the House of Detention, and called for the continuation of the struggle, fraternisation between workers and soldiers, and for the election of strike committees in the factories. Noting that '[f]or victory we need organisation, we need a leading centre of the movement', the RSDRP appealed to the workers: 'Start immediately in factories for the elections to the factory strike committees. Their

45 Melancon 1988, pp. 485–6; Melancon 1990, pp. 267–8.

46 Iurenev, 1924, p. 142; Shestoi s'ezd 1958, p. 149. The entire text of this leaflet has not been made public. I am not certain if this leaflet called for the establishment of the soviet as a provisional revolutionary government. Burdzhakov cites a leaflet similar to this one but with different expressions: 'It is impossible to retreat! Either freedom or death! Don't wander around [raskhodites'] the barracks! Don't leave the city! Get those who are still standing on the sideline to join the revolution!': Burdzhakov 1967, p. 243. (From Tsentral'nyi muzei sovremennoi istorii, f. listovok, inv. No. 3693/224). There is no signature of the issuing organisation in this leaflet.

47 'Iz No. 1 Izvestii Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov: Soldaty', Gosudrasevennyi muzei politicheskoi istorii Rossii (St. Petersburg), f. 11-816. I thank Aleksei Kulegin for giving me a copy of this leaflet. Clearly it was issued by someone close to the moderate socialists interested in directing the insurgent soldiers to the Tauride Palace.

representatives will compose the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, which will create a Provisional Revolutionary Government'. The Mezhraiontsy, supported by a small group of other left-wing socialists, were thus the first revolutionary group to formulate the demand for the creation of a provisional revolutionary government in the form of the Soviet.⁴⁸

After the right socialists' call for the establishment of the soviet of workers' deputies and recognising that elections of deputies were now taking place, the left socialists were attempting to change the nature of the soviet then being called by the right socialists into a revolutionary power rather than a supplementary organisation to assist the liberal opposition to form a new government to replace the tsarist regime. And yet this leaflet omitted the location of the soviet to be formed. The implication of this omission was clear: consistent with their position since the beginning of February to oppose any notion to turn the Tauride Palace into the centre of the movement, the left socialists pointedly did not support the creation of the soviet in the Tauride Palace.

Around 4 p.m. another leaflet was issued, and it was reported that copies of this leaflet were dropped from an airplane throughout the city.⁴⁹ This leaflet, issued in the name of 'the Organising Soviet of Workers' Deputies', began by describing the status of the insurrection at the time: 'Comrades, the long-awaited hour has arrived! The people are taking power into their own hands, the revolution has begun'. It then urged the insurgents to act: 'Do not lose a single moment. Create a Provisional Revolutionary Government today'. As if to follow the RSDRP leaflet, it emphasised the need to create the centre of organisation, and appealed to the insurgents to 'elect deputies, have them make contact with one another and create, under the protection of the armed forces, a Soviet of Deputies'. Since the insurrection was still in progress, the leaflet summoned the insurgents to bring over the soldiers who remained neutral to the side of

48 For the text of this leaflet, see *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie 1917*, pp. 4–5, its English translation, Hasegawa 1977, p. 106. Originally I took the position that this leaflet was issued by the lower level of radical Bolsheviks connected with the defunct Petersburg Committee, rejecting Wada's contention. But the careful reconstruction of the origins of the leaflet and the textual analysis by Melancon have led me to revise my view. See Hasegawa 1977, pp. 96–8, 106; Hasegawa 1981, pp. 333–4; Wada 1968, p. 422; Melancon, 1988, pp. 486–9; Melancon 1990, pp. 269–70.

49 The story about this leaflet being dropped from an airplane was first reported by Semenov 1917, p. 19. White, noting that a Bolshevik, Dmitrii Pavlov, was closely connected with airplane design, argues that only the Bolsheviks could have issued this leaflet. White 1989, p. 614.

the revolution. It then declared: 'Let Finland Station be the centre where the revolutionary headquarters will gather'.⁵⁰

The question of who issued this leaflet has been a controversial topic among historians. But it is most likely that the Mezhrainontsy, possibly in collaboration with broad left socialists including the Vyborg Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks and the left SRS, were the agent responsible for its production.⁵¹ At the time the RSDRP leaflet was issued – around 2 p.m. – the outcome of the revolution was still uncertain, and the task of organising the centre of the insurrection was raised as the pressing issue. While the RSDRP leaflet did not designate the location of the soviet, the second leaflet designated Finland Station as the site of the soviet, from which location it envisaged that a provisional revolutionary government was to emerge. Thus, the Mezhrainontsy and the left-wing socialists challenged the Petrograd Soviet that was being formed at the initiative of the right socialists in two important ways. First, they proposed to create a soviet at Finland Station in the Vyborg District, rejecting the proposal of the right socialists to establish the Petrograd Soviet at the Tauride Palace. Second, the left socialists perceived the Soviet to be a provisional revolutionary power, not a supplementary organisation to assist the formation of a bourgeois government as the right socialists envisaged.

According to Iurenev, the Mezhrainontsy held another meeting at five in the evening, at which they decided to issue two other leaflets. The first leaflet, written by Iurenev and addressed to the soldiers, called for the election of

50 *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie* 1957, p. 5; for the English translation of the entire text, Hasegawa 1977, p. 106. In the text in *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie* 1957, the last line was 'Organise the Soviet of Workers' Deputies', but in the text found in earlier literature, the last line was the issuing agent, 'Organising the Soviet of Workers' Deputies'. See Mints 1957, p. 19; Zalsavskii and Kantorovich 1924, p. 251.

51 See Melancon 1988, pp. 489–93, 499. My original interpretation that this leaflet was issued by the Bolshevik Vyborg Committee, see Hasegawa 1977, p. 99; Hasegawa 1981, p. 334. Also see different views on the issuing agency of this leaflet, Burdzhakov 1967 p. 210; Tokarev 1976, pp. 25–6; Wada 1968, p. 422; White 1979, pp. 499–500; White 1989, 602–24; Longley 1989, pp. 625–45. Especially interesting is a spirited exchange between Melancon 1988 and White 1989. I am now inclined to accept Wada-Melancon's view that it was more likely to be issued by the Mezhrainontsy in cooperation with the Bolsheviks in the Vyborg District, who were dissatisfied with the lack of leadership of the Russian Bureau. Melancon's arguments that a printing press was not available to the Bolsheviks and that the textual analysis of the Mezhrainontsy leaflet on 26 February, the RSDRP leaflet, and the Finland Station leaflet had a consistent pattern appear to be convincing. White 1989, however, is extremely useful in tracing the historiography of the February Revolution in the context of internal political struggles in the 1920s and 1930s.

soldiers' delegates to 'the provisional revolutionary government', but did not mention anything about the Soviet.⁵² But the second leaflet stated:

The place of the tsarist government is being taken by the Provisional Revolutionary Government. It must be created by the representatives of the proletariat and the army. Comrades! Immediately undertake the elections to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. The army is already conducting elections of their representatives. Tomorrow the Provisional Revolutionary Government will finally be formed.

More than thirty thousand copies of these leaflets were distributed late at night throughout the city in the name of the Mezhrayontsy and the SRS.⁵³

As it turned out, however, the left-wing socialists were powerless to stem the tide of the swelling movement among the insurgents to turn the Tauride Palace into the centre of the insurrection. In the newly expanding basis of the revolution, in which the insurgent soldiers, surpassing the workers, became the most important actors, and in which other layers of society had joined the insurrection, the voice of the radical left socialists became less effective in swaying the course of events. In addition, the Finland Station in the Vyborg District was unsuited for the seat of the Petrograd Soviet, for the reasons stated above. Soon the left socialists abandoned the idea of making Finland Station the seat of the emerging Soviet, and themselves joined the torrents of marches going to the Tauride Palace.

The Russian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party lagged behind the quickly developing events. It had had considerable pressure from the Vyborg District Committee to issue a manifesto outlining the general policy of the Bolsheviks. Frustrated with the Russian Bureau's reluctance, Kaiurov and other members of the Vyborg Bolsheviks composed a draft proposal of a manifesto and brought it to the Russian Bureau, which finally approved it with minor changes. The manifesto, 'To All the Citizens of Russia', defined 'the task of the working class and the revolutionary army' as the creation of a provisional revolutionary government, 'that must stand at the head of the newly born republican state'. It further urged the workers and the soldiers 'to elect immediately your representatives to the provisional revolutionary government that must be created under the protection of the revolutionary people and troops who have revolted'.⁵⁴

52 Iurenev 1924, pp. 142–3; Melancon 1988, p. 493.

53 Iurenev 1924, p. 143; Shestoi s"ezd 1957, p. 149; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 211.

54 *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie* 1957, pp. 3–4; 'Manifest Rossiiskoi Sotsial Demokraticheskoi

Although the Russian Bureau raised the problem of power as the pressing question – unlike the right and centre socialists, who avoided it – the manifesto mentioned absolutely nothing about the Soviet. Unlike the ‘Finland Station’ document, the Bolsheviks’ manifesto counterposed a provisional revolutionary government in place of the Petrograd Soviet – an unrealistic position at a time when the workers were favourably responding to the establishment of the Soviet. Nevertheless, the Russian Bureau’s negative attitude toward the Soviet did not keep the lower echelon of the Bolsheviks from advancing a different position. It is likely that these dissatisfied Bolshevik activists joined the Mezhrainitsy and other left-wing socialists, attempting to turn Finland Station into the Soviet as the embryo of a provisional revolutionary government.

Creation of the Food Supply Commission

Despite the original intention of the Provisional Executive Committee, its very existence, in the absence of any other authority in Petrograd – the Provisional Committee of the State Duma had not been formed yet – imposed two practical tasks on it. One was the creation of the Food Supply Commission. The shortage of food, which had touched off the popular outburst on 23 February, was compounded by the insurrection. The presence of thousands of hungry soldiers, who had had nothing to eat since early morning, was dangerous. Lest the insurrection should turn into large-scale pogroms and drunken orgies, the socialists who gathered in the Tauride Palace were forced to take action by creating the Food Supply Commission. This commission was headed by V.G. Groman, a Menshevik statistician, who was a member of the Special Council for Food Supplies as a representative of the Union of Towns. Volkov (Menshevik leader of the cooperative movement) and the specialists on food distribution, M.V. Novorusskii and Frankorusskii, also joined the commission. The Provisional Executive Committee issued an appeal to the people to help feed the insurgent soldiers, since the Food Supply Commission alone could not immediately cope with this task.⁵⁵

Rabochei Partii’, *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta*, Supplement, No. 1, 28 February 1917, p. 1; *Pravda*, 5 March 1917. For the interpretation of this manifesto, see Hasegawa 1977, pp. 100–5. For the conflict between the Vyborg District Bolsheviks and the Russian Bureau, see White 1989, pp. 609–13, and Gavrilov 1927.

55 Tokarev 1976, pp. 50–1; ‘Vozzvanie Vremennogo ispolnitel’nogo komiteta Soveta rabochikh deputatov k grazhdanam ob obespechenii soldat prodovol’stviiem’, *Izvestiia Komiteta*

Although the Food Supply Commission took the first step in organising the food distribution mechanism, however, it had no intention of usurping a governmental function, nor could it expect to bring about a successful solution to the problem by itself, since a majority of its members had neither experience nor connections. The representatives of the Central Cooperatives of the Association of Wholesale Purchase, the only experts included in the commission, immediately demanded the formation of a unified Food Supply Commission composed of the members of both the Soviet and of the Duma representatives. By the evening of 27 February, Shingarev, the expert on food supply in the liberal camp, joined the commission, representing the Duma Committee. The name of the commission was changed to the Food Supply Commission of the Duma Committee and the Petrograd Soviet.⁵⁶

Formation of the Military Commission

Another task that the Provisional Executive Committee took upon itself was the organisation of the Military Commission. To avoid degeneration of the insurrection into uncontrollable mobs engaging in pillaging and lootings and to prepare for the expected counterrevolution, those soldiers roaming around the city had to be organised into disciplined revolutionary military units. One of the members of the Provisional Executive Committee, Kapelinskii, telephoned officers known to be socialists or socialist sympathisers. Shortly afterwards, Colonel S.D. Mstislavskii, an SR member, who worked at that time as a librarian in the Military Academy of the General Staff, soon appeared in the Tauride Palace. With the assistance of Lieutenant V.M. Filippovskii, who also responded to Kapelinskii's telephone call, Mstislavskii began organising the Military Commission in Room 13, next to the headquarters of the Provisional Executive Committee (Room 12). P.I. Pal'chinskii, a civil servant in the Artillery Administration, became secretary of the Military Commission. Later they were joined by SR officer M.M. Dobranitskii, but at the initial stage most of its members were noncommissioned officers, and with the exception of those mentioned above, no commissioned officer volunteered.⁵⁷ Kerenskii, who had already established

Petrogradskikh zhurnal'istov, 27 February 1917, p. 1; Document No. 4, Petrogradskii Soviet 1991, p. 21.

56 Rafes 1922, p. 190; Peshekhonov 1923, p. 261. See the next chapter on the joint Food Supply Commission.

57 Tokarev 1976, pp. 54–5.

his own staff and implemented a series of measure, maintained constant contact with the Military Commission.⁵⁸

Mstislavskii soon found the situation extremely unsatisfactory and his assignment hopelessly difficult. It is true that a large number of soldiers joined the insurrection, but the moment they abandoned their positions, the Petrograd garrison units ceased to be capable military bodies. The insurgent soldiers were as much against military discipline and organisation as against the old regime, for they envisioned the officers as an embodiment of the regime. The soldiers in the streets lost military cohesion, obeyed no leaders, and acted completely on their own. Moreover, it was impossible to obtain any accurate information about the loyal troops – the immediate threat foreseen by Mstislavskii. The chief of staff of the revolutionary forces described the discouraging situation as follows:

Our situation was catastrophic. It is true that Khabalov made an essential, gross mistake by withdrawing his troops from the centre of the city and giving the 'rebels' a chance to surround them from all directions ... But was there really a revolutionary atmosphere in the city? ... I remember the crowds of unarmed soldiers roaming about the city, juveniles engaged in arson, and automobiles driven madly about the streets. If only we had one cohesive unit which maintained its entire composition. We had neither artillery, nor machine guns; neither commanding officers, nor communications. With the exception of Filippovskii ... who had arrived fifteen minutes after me, there were no officers.⁵⁹

Mstislavskii desperately tried to form a military unit from the soldiers who had gathered in the Tauride Palace. Some completely ignored his plea, while others responded with hostility: 'We are tired and hungry'. Even those soldiers who were persuaded to assemble in Room 13 soon left for the Soviet session held in the next room. Only a handful of despairing people remained in the deserted 'headquarters' of the revolutionary army.

At this point, Mstislavskii decided to move the Soviet Military Commission from Room 13 to Rooms 41 and 42, the office of the vice-chairman of the Duma, Nekrasov, and its adjacent room, in the right wing of the Tauride Palace, where the Duma Committee's Military Commission had already established its headquarters. This move was prompted by Mstislavskii's judgement that

58 See Chapter 18.

59 Mstislavskii 1922, pp. 20–1.

the socialists alone could not organise these unwieldy soldiers. He concluded that a wide segment of the officers, sympathetic to the liberal circles in the Duma, though not to the revolutionaries, should be mobilised for that purpose. These officers had begun to assemble in Room 41. Thus, even before the Duma Committee's Military Commission took over the Petrograd Soviet's Military Commission, the Soviet Military Commission was eager to yield its authority to the Duma Committee's Military Commission.

The transfer of the room, however, did not immediately improve the situation. All the officers assembled in Room 41 turned out to be noncommissioned officers from the front who happened to be in Petrograd on leave. They could not be expected to be effective in establishing contact with the mutinous troops. Moreover, four machine guns the Military Commission had managed to obtain proved to be unusable. As a last resort, Mstislavskii sent officers alone to such strategic positions as Nikolaevskii and Tsarskoe Selo railway stations, instructing them to pick up the necessary soldiers along the way. To make his order look official, he grabbed from Nekrasov's desk a pile of official forms with the impressive letterhead of the vice-chairman of the Duma and the emblem of the State Duma at the top. Although he finally managed to form a detachment of about fifty soldiers under the command of an ensign, this was obviously not enough to respond to the flood of requests for military protection that started pouring in. Aware of the powerlessness of their forces, the leaders of the Military Commission feared every moment that loyal troops led by Khabalov would launch a counterattack upon the Tauride Palace – an ironic tragicomedy, considering that only a few miles away from Tauride, General Khabalov, equally convinced of the military powerlessness of his forces, awaited the moment when the rebels would attack the loyal troops.⁶⁰ Mstislavskii and the other members of the Soviet Military Commission did not know that the Duma Committee had already been established and had taken effective measures to organise the insurgent soldiers.⁶¹

The First Session of the Petrograd Soviet

Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairmen

The socialist intelligentsia began to gather in the Tauride Palace to attend the first soviet session scheduled at 7 p.m. In addition to the original members

60 Ibid., pp. 23–6.

61 See Chapter 18.

of the Provisional Executive Committee, there were G.S. Khrustalev-Nosar', the former chairman of the St. Petersburg Soviet of 1905; N.N. Sukhanov, who anxiously awaited the moment when he could put his ideas into practice; Iu. Steklov, a former Bolshevik publicist, who now stood close to the Menshevik-Internationalists; G. Ehrlich, a Jewish Bund leader; M. Rafes, another Bund leader, who had just come out of the Kresty Prison; and A. Shliapnikov, leader of the Bolshevik party. The 'revolutionary democracy', as the socialist leaders called the coalition of various socialist factions in the Soviet, was beginning to form.

In contrast to the socialist intelligentsia, very few elected delegates from factories and military units attended the first session, although many soldiers and workers began to assemble in Room 12 to hear the discussions of the Soviet. Under the circumstances it was, of course, impossible to expect the workers to conduct orderly elections of their deputies with only a few hours' advance notice. Most of the workers were in the streets, and it was extremely doubtful that they would return to their factories to have an election. A small group of Nobel workers gathered in the street and elected an SR worker deputy to the Soviet in a perfunctory manner. In the Putilov Factory a workers' cooperative was sent to the Tauride Palace as its representative. Some members, Sokolov for instance, argued for an immediate opening without waiting for the arrival of duly elected delegates, but the opening of the session was delayed until nine o'clock on Shliapnikov's insistence.⁶²

Disturbed by the absence of the Bolshevik delegates, Shliapnikov got in touch with some of the activists by telephone, urging them to attend the Soviet session. The party activists on the lower levels, however, refused to respond to Shliapnikov's appeal, explaining that they were occupied with the struggle against tsarism in the streets.⁶³ In the Vyborg District the Bicycle Battalion was effectively resisting an attack by insurgents. Naturally, the Bolshevik activists, who had demonstrated a penchant for concrete action against the old regime, placed more emphasis on the attack on what they conceived of as one of the last citadels of tsarism in Petrograd than they did on attendance at the Soviet session. Their refusal, moreover, revealed their bitter suspicion and hostility to a Soviet created on the initiative of the right socialists. It was these activists who had led the workers' movement for the past five days in the factories as well as in the streets, putting their lives on the line, and suddenly the intelligentsia, who had stood aloof from the movement, stole

62 Tokarev 1976, p. 31; Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 144.

63 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 144.

the leadership from them. Kaiurov reminisced that the news of the Soviet put him in a pessimistic mood. 'These gloomy thoughts', he states, 'brought back the memory of October of 1905, when the workers' friends came out onto the rainy road as if from underneath the earth, but no sooner had the workers' movement been defeated than they disappeared as quickly'.⁶⁴ With resentment and contempt for these 'chatterboxes', they stubbornly remained in the streets, where the outcome of the struggle had been long before determined. Their resentment, at the same time, concealed their painful awareness that the leadership was finally slipping out of their hands. They did not want to admit it, but the revolution had, indeed, reached a stage where politics at a higher level played a more decisive part in determining its outcome.

Finally at 9 p.m. a short, stocky, half-bald man in a cutaway with a flashing pince-nez and dark bushy beard – a man who would have better fit in a well-mannered intellectual salon – approached the podium of Room 12 in Tauride Palace. This socialist lawyer, Sokolov, called the meeting to order. By that time about fifty voting representatives and two hundred observers packed the room, while new groups kept pouring into the hall.⁶⁵ It was impossible to check the credentials of each representative. Shliapnikov recalled:

A minority of delegates, if not all, had merely 'oral' credentials without any other certificates from their factories. But who could check on it? It was decided that the meeting of that day was merely an initiative meeting, and that the real meeting with normal representation would be held later.⁶⁶

This decision, however, was not a mere formality, for the later 'formal' sessions reversed nothing established at the first session. It is important to note that most of the voting members at the first session were actually self-appointed intelligentsia rather than elected delegates from the factories and the military units. Sukhanov describes how Sokolov was arbitrarily deciding who had

64 Kaiurov 1923, p. 169.

65 According to Shliapnikov, there were 40 to 50 voting delegates. Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 146. Sukhanov gives the figure of 250, while the anonymous author of 'Kak obrazovalsya Petrogradskii Sovet', *Izvestiia Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, 27 August 1917, cites 125 to 150. Neither author specifies how many were voting members. Peshekhnov's figure is 40 to 50, who were mostly intelligentsia. Peshekhnov 1923, p. 262. Judging from the votes cast for the election of various officers, the figure given by Shliapnikov and Peshekhnov appears to be accurate. Also see Tokarev 1976, pp. 32–4.

66 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 147.

voting rights and who had only consultative votes. Sokolov gave Sukhanov voting rights. At least thirty-one to thirty-five members belonged to the intelligentsia, whose voting rights were acquired through personal acquaintanceship rather than as a result of elections in the factories or military units.⁶⁷ Later on 2 March the crowds assembled in the Ekaterina Hall shouted at Miliukov, who announced the formation of the Provisional Government: 'Who elected you?' The delegates who assembled during the first Soviet session might as well have asked the same question, but no one did.

The meeting proceeded in the midst of confusion and intoxicated pandemonium, often interrupted by soldiers' reports that a new company had decided to join the revolution. Each report was met with thunderous applause. Despite all this exuberance, the Soviet session concerned itself exclusively with mundane organisational issues, avoiding the most fundamental questions – what kind of revolutionary power should be created and what relationship should the Soviet have with this power? Naturally, the right and centre socialists had no intention of discussing this matter, but strangely this was not even raised by the Bolsheviks or the Mezhraintsy or the left SRs. These groups were 'weak and unprepared, without initiative, and incapable of orienting themselves in the situation'.⁶⁸

Election of the Presidium and the Secretariat

The session took up the election of officers as the first order of business. Khrustalev-Nosar' was nominated as if to tie the broken thread with the 1905 Soviet, but this sentimental nostalgia did not work. This man of the past with dubious integrity as a socialist was soundly defeated.⁶⁹ Instead, the chairmanship went to Chkheidze, a Georgian Menshevik and a deputy to the Fourth Duma, while two other Socialist deputies to the Duma, Skhobelev and Kerenskii, were elected vice-chairmen. The election of these three socialist Duma deputies indicated that their visibility rather than their political creed had greater meaning at the initial stage. Chkheidze, a slender Georgian with a bearded, dark, thin face and a hooked nose, noted for his oratory as well as his dogmatic adherence to Marxist principles, occupied the position of chairman of the Petrograd Soviet until September, when he was replaced by Trotskii. He represented the Soviet in the same manner that Prince L'vov represented the

67 Sukhanov 1922, pp. 125–6; Ferro 1960, p. 370.

68 Sukhanov 1922, p. 127.

69 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 146–7. Shliapnikov denounced Khrustalev-Nosar' as anti-Semitic as well as for his connections with the reactionary paper, *Novoe vremia*.

Provisional Government – a figurehead rather than an active, dynamic promoter of policies. Together with Kerenskii, Chkheidze was a member of the Duma Committee, but after his election to the chairmanship of the Soviet he devoted all his energies to the fulfilment of this ceremonial position.

A.F. Kerenskii, with his flamboyant theatrics and flowery oratory, became the unquestionable leader of the revolution overnight. While Chkheidze resisted or even resented the seduction of power, what drove Kerenskii was his ambition for power. It is almost incongruous to find Kerenskii's name associated with the Soviet, since he not only remained in the Duma Committee, but also spent most of his time in the right wing of the Tauride Palace. Yet he knew that his usefulness in the Duma Committee stemmed from his popularity among the masses and his official connections with the Soviet. Thus, his election to the position of vice-chairman of the Soviet carried immense political implications not only for Kerenskii personally but also for the relationship between the Soviet and the Duma Committee.⁷⁰ Although overshadowed by Kerenskii and Chkheidze, Skobelev's role should not be underestimated. Chkheidze was suffering from a severe cold with high fever during these crucial days, and he was in and out of the Tauride Palace for rest. Skobelev played a crucial role in filling his place. Skobelev was the one who delivered a speech welcoming the insurgent soldiers who first arrived at the Tauride Palace, and as discussed later, he was sent to take over the Petropavlovsk Fortress and stop the trains for Rodzianko's trip to meet the tsar.

After the election of the chairman, Chkheidze delivered a short speech in which he stressed the significance of the revolution, appealing to the Soviet and the 'democracy' to complete the revolutionary transformation and concluding his speech with 'Long live the revolution!' 'Long live the revolutionary army!' Kerenskii's speech followed, but after uttering 'a few meaningless phrases', he immediately vanished into the right wing, not to appear again in the Soviet.⁷¹ After the election of the Presidium, the Soviet session proceeded to the election of the Secretariat, to which Gvozdev, Sokolov, Grinevich and G.G. Pankov were elected. Three were Mensheviks (Gvozdev was a Menshevik-defencist, and Grinevich and Pankov were Menshevik-Internationalists).

70 See Melancon 2009, pp. 21–2. Despite their fundamental disagreements on the nature of the February Revolution, Melancon and Nikolaev agree on the role of Kerenskii as the most decisive leader of the February Revolution. See Nikolaev 2005.

71 'Kak obrazovalsia Petrogradskii sovet', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i sldatskikh deputatov*, 27 August, 1917, p. 7; Sukhanov 1922, vol. 1, pp. 128–9.

The Food Supply Commission and the Military Commission

After the election of the Secretariat, Frankorusskii reported in the name of the Food Supply Commission on the critical food situation in Petrograd, and moved that the commission be given the authority to confiscate all private and public food stocks, including those in the Army Commissary Department, so as to insure the distribution of food to the soldiers as well as to the general populace in Petrograd. The Soviet approved the creation of the already existing Food Supply Commission, headed by Groman, and passed Frankorusskii's motion unanimously.

The session moved on to military matters. It was necessary to establish the relationship between the Soviet and the Duma Committee's Military Commission, which had already begun its function. Although the commission was organised at the initiative of the Provisional Executive Committee, it now showed a strong inclination to cooperate with liberal circles by relocating its headquarters 'topographically' in the right wing of the Tauride Palace. The Soviet approved the creation of the joint Military Commission and decided to place all its activities under the direct control of the Soviet by demanding the automatic inclusion within it of the Executive Committee members. This decision received an immediate approval from the commission.⁷²

The measure approved by the Soviet about food supply and the military situation indicated that the Soviet assigned to itself the tasks that under ordinary circumstances belonged to the government. It was not a conscious attempt by the Soviet leaders to usurp governmental power; rather they were inevitable measures dictated by circumstance. These problems were presented as practical necessities demanded by the situation, without any bearing, they believed, on the problem of power. The Soviet leaders conceived of these measures as merely temporary, to be transferred in due course to a legitimate government.

Creation of the Militia and the Literary Commission

A Menshevik, M.A. Brounshtein, then moved to organise a militia in every city district to 'restore order and direct the struggle against anarchy and pogroms'. Every factory was to form a militia of one hundred workers out of every thousand while the district committees were to be formed under the commissars dispatched by the Executive Committee. It is important to note that the maker of the motion defined restoration of order as the primary purpose of the militia rather than further struggle against the remnants of tsarism. There was a motion to amend the proposal by adding the task of fighting the remnants

⁷² Sukhanov 1922, vol. 1, pp. 128–9.

of the old regime, but Sukhanov opposed this amendment to make sure that the militia was not charged with this mission, which was already adequately handled by the Military Commission.⁷³ The original motion was accepted, but no machinery existed to implement it.

During the discussion on the defence of the city from anarchy, the need to address the general populace of Petrograd in a proclamation was voiced. For that purpose a Literary Commission composed of Sokolov, Peshekhonov, Steklov, Grinevich and Sukhanov was created. According to Sukanov, 'No directives were given to the commission'. So it was up to the commission members to address the populace. Sukhanov noted: 'The first act of the Soviet with political significance was accomplished in such a way'. The members of the Literary Commission immediately left the assembly hall to compose the draft proclamation. The Soviet session also charged the Literary Commission with the publication of the newspaper *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh deputatov*. A Bolshevik, V.D. Bonch-Bruevich, who had engineered the occupation of one of the largest printing offices in Petrograd, Kopeika, offered its services for publication of the Soviet newspaper. Steklov became the chief editor, assisted by the Bolshevik intellectuals Avilov, V. Bazarov, G. Tsyperovich, Bonch-Bruevich, and I. Goldenburg.⁷⁴ The first issue of *Izvestiia* appeared on 28 February.

Election of the Executive Committee

The Soviet session dealt with one last important item, the election of the Executive Committee. It was agreed that three members of the Presidium and the four members of the Secretariat would be automatically included in the Executive Committee. In addition to these seven, eight more members were elected. Three nonparty intellectuals, Sukhanov, Steklov and Kapelinskii, were the first members elected, receiving from thirty-eight to forty-one votes. Realising that their factions had no possibility of gaining a majority on their own, both the right and the left supported the nonparty intellectuals in the hope that they could be won over to their side.⁷⁵ Kapelinskii, a little-known activist of the cooperative movement, received one of the highest votes because of the active involvement of the cooperatives in the election of the Soviet deputies. Shliapnikov and Aleksandrovich, representing the left,

73 Ibid., p. 132.

74 Ibid., pp. 134–5; V.D. Bonch-Bruevich, 'Pervye revoliutsionnye gazety fevral'skoi revoliutsii: Izvestiia i Pravda', OR RNB, f. 369, p. 16, ed. khr. 30, ll. 1–2; Steklov 1923, pp. 180–1; Steklov 1965, pp. 78–9.

75 Tokarev 1976, p. 37.

barely managed to obtain the minimum twenty to twenty-two votes necessary for election. In addition to these five, three more were added: E. Sokolovskii, P. Krasikov (Pavlovich), and Zalutskii.⁷⁶ The newly elected Executive Committee included two Bolsheviks (Shliapnikov and Zalutskii), two Socialist Revolutionaries (Aleksandrovich and Kerenskii), six Mensheviks (Chkheidze, Skobelev, Gvozdev, Grinevich, Sokolovskii and Pankov), and five nonparty intellectuals (Steklov, Sukhanov, Sokolov, Krasikov and Kapelinskii).⁷⁷ Although Steklov, Sokolov and Krasikov, the non-party intellectuals, were former Bolsheviks, it is obvious that the Menshevik party dominated the committee.

However, party affiliations give a misleading impression of the political leaning of the Executive Committee – it is necessary to classify the members of the Executive Committee on a political spectrum. The right was represented by Kerenskii and Gvozdev, while Shliapnikov, Zalutskii and Aleksandrovich formed the left bloc. All the rest were situated in between these two extremes. Among these ten members, Chkheidze and Skobelev were Menshevik Duma deputies and represented the moderate internationalist position. Grinevich, Pankov, and Sokolovskii were members of the Menshevik Initiative Group. Kapelinskii's political leaning cannot be clearly established, but he appears to have taken a position similar to the Initiative Group. Former Bolsheviks Steklov, Sokolov and Krasikov took a centralist position, and Sukhanov espoused an internationalism close to the Menshevik initiative group.⁷⁸

Contrary to the often repeated evaluation of the Executive Committee as being dominated by moderate Mensheviks, its left-wing leaning was obvious in its composition. In the first place, despite the presence of Bogdanov, Zenzinov and Rifes in the first session, the right managed to send only two representatives. Although the Workers' Group played a crucial part in taking the initiative in forming the Soviet, Gvozdev was the only one who was elected to the Executive Committee, and even his election provoked a strong protest. Secondly, in the context of the political realignment that had developed during the war, the composition of the Executive Committee meant a victory of the left-wing alliance, if not of the radical left-wing socialists. The left, combined with the

76 Steklov 1923, p. 177; Sukhanov 1922, vol. 1, pp. 148–9; 'Kak obrazovalsia Petrogradskii Sovet', p. 7. Precisely speaking, the Executive Committee created on 27 February called itself the 'Provisional Executive Committee'. The reelection of the Executive Committee members, however, never took place. On 28 February, the Executive Committee further expanded its members while maintaining the original members elected on 27 February. Zlokazov 1969, p. 55.

77 Tokarev 1974, p. 37.

78 Wada 1968, p. 433.

Menshevik Initiative Group and the nonparty intellectuals who stood for internationalism, were represented by ten members, an overwhelming majority of the Executive Committee.⁷⁹

But the left could not capitalise on this strength. This was partly because of ideological disunity and confusion among its members, and partly because of the lack of leadership by the Bolshevik party. Although the left was unanimous in its opposition to the war and in its support of the proletariat's struggle against the tsarist regime, there existed within it disagreements on the question of the political power to be formed. And as a result of the victorious insurrection, it was precisely the question of power that became the most urgent question of the moment and that led to the disintegration of the left bloc. The Bolshevik party was also split on the question of power. Although the Russian Bureau and the lower echelon activists advocated for the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government, they disagreed on the question of what role the Soviet should play. In addition, the Petersburg Committee, which had provided a driving force in the loose alliance of the anti-war groups during the war, had been destroyed by police arrests since 25 February. As a result, instead of the left-wing alliance, Sukhanov, Steklov and Sokolov emerged as the main spokesmen of the Executive Committee. Although their position on the war was internationalist, their response to the question of power was similar to the right socialists, and at the inception of the Executive Committee, the rest of the members with the exception of the extreme left gravitated to their leadership. In fact, Sukhanov, Steklov and Sokolov were so eager to let the bourgeoisie form the government that they were reluctant to raise the issue of the war.

After the election of the Executive Committee, Shliapnikov made a strategic mistake. Apparently dissatisfied with the extreme minority the Bolsheviks occupied in the Executive Committee, he moved to include in the committee two representatives from each socialist party, one from its central organisation and another from its city organisation. This motion was approved. As a result, by the next day the following representatives entered the Executive Committee: Bramson and Chaikovskii (Trudoviks), Peshekhonov and Charnoluskii (Popular Socialist party), Ehrlich and Rafes (Bund), Bogdanov and Baturskii (Menshevik), Zenzinov and Sviatitskii (Socialist Revolutionary), Iurennev (Mezhraiontsy), and Molotov and Shutko (Bolsheviks). With the exception of the last three all were right socialists. Shliapnikov's resolution clearly contributed to strengthening the Executive Committee's right wing.⁸⁰

79 Tokarev 1974, p. 38, Melancon 2009, pp. 28–9.

80 Wada 1968, p. 434; Sukhanov 1922, vol. 1, p. 179; Tokarev 1974, pp. 46–7.

Ironically, no deputies duly elected from factories were elected to the Executive Committee, and the soldiers' deputies were not included in it until 1 March. The self-appointed intelligentsia completely dominated the highest decision-making body of the Soviet. The predominance of intellectuals clearly distinguished the Petrograd Soviet of 1917 from its predecessor of 1905, which never lost the character of a workers' self-government.⁸¹ Also important to note, as Melancon points out, is the continuity between the loosely connected network of socialists who met from time to time before the February Revolution and almost daily during the February strike and the composition of the Executive Committee.⁸²

The First Executive Committee Meeting

After the election of the Executive Committee, Shliapnikov raised the question of establishing district soviets in Petrograd. However, recognising the lateness of the hour and the importance of the delegates' immediate return to their districts to inform the broader section of the populace of the decisions adopted by the Soviet, the plenary session decided to refer this matter to the Executive Committee. The chaotic yet exuberant first session of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies adjourned at midnight. Passionate speeches were delivered, the revolution enthusiastically hailed, and the organisational structure of the Soviet firmly laid down. Yet the first session curiously kept silent on the most important issue of the moment – the problem of power.

Immediately after the Soviet session, the Executive Committee held its first meeting. Concerning the establishment of local soviets, the Executive Committee decided to dispatch 'commissars for establishing popular power in the districts of Petrograd'. Shliapnikov (Vyborg District), Peshekhonov (Petrograd District), Surin (SR, Lesnoi District), and seven other commissars were appointed.⁸³ These commissars, however, had little influence as liaison between the Petrograd Soviet and the district soviets. Shliapnikov mentions that the meeting of the commissars held immediately after the Executive Committee 'bore a theoretical character', since they had no experience and did not know how to go about their business.⁸⁴ Very few district soviets were created immediately

81 Anweiler 1958, p. 173, Anweiler 1967, pp. 116–17.

82 Melancon 2009, p. 29.

83 'Reshenie Iсполnitel'nogo komiteta Soveta rabochikh deputatov', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo soveta rabochikh deputatov*, No. 1, Supplement, 28 February 1917, p. 1.

84 Surin was later discovered to be a former tsarist Okhrana agent and arrested. Zenzinov 1953, p. 220. Peshekhonov was not informed of this decision until the afternoon of the following day. Peshekhonov 1923, p. 226. The names of the rest of the commissars are not

after the February Revolution: in addition to the Vyborg District Soviet created on the initiative of a Mezhraionets worker from the Petrograd Cartridge Factory, Maksimov, they were established only in Vasil'evskii Island, Nevskii District, and the Narva District in the early days of March. The commissars appointed by the Executive Committee in any event do not appear to have played a major part in their creation.⁸⁵

The Executive Committee proceeded to discuss the creation of the militia. Confirming the resolution passed by the Soviet session, it established a headquarters in each district, where soldiers and workers were urged to gather for the creation of the militia. Concerning the relationship between the Soviet and the Duma Military Commissions, the Executive Committee decided to make the latter directly responsible to the Executive Committee and to send Sokolov and Aleksandrovich to watch over its activities.⁸⁶

Turning next to the relationship between the Soviet and the Duma Committee, the Executive Committee elected Kerenskii and Chkheidze as the Soviet's official representatives to the Duma Committee, although both actually had been included in that committee even before this decision. According to Shliapnikov, the two Soviet representatives were to watch over the activities of the Duma Committee lest the latter should 'compromise with the remnants of tsarism behind the back of the people who had stood up for the revolution'.⁸⁷ In this decision one can see the genesis of the Soviet's basic attitude toward the Duma Committee, and eventually toward the Provisional Government. Implied in it was the conclusion that a governmental power would emerge from the Duma Committee, while the Soviet would limit itself to exerting pressure upon the Duma Committee so as to make sure that the latter would not deviate from the expected course of actions. On this basic assumption, at least at the first Executive Committee meeting, all the members including Shliapnikov had no disagreement.⁸⁸

known. Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 154. According to Tokarev, the commissars remained only on paper. Tokarev 1974, pp. 69–70.

85 Gordienko 1957, p. 70; Raionnye sovety 1966, vol. 2, p. 59.

86 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 152; 'Reshenie Iсполnitel'nogo komiteta Soveta rabochikh deputatov', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo soveta rabochikh deputatove*, No. 1, Supplement, 28 February 1917, p. 1.

87 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 153.

88 Rafes states that the Bolsheviks from the beginning raised objections to cooperation with the Duma Committee. Rafes 1922, p. 190. On the basis of this statement, Burdzhakov contends that the Bolsheviks refused to support the general policy of the Executive Committee toward the Duma Committee. Burdzhakov 1967, p. 215. There is no evidence,

When the Executive Committee finished the first meeting, it was past five in the morning on 28 February. The second day of the revolution was about to start. The leaders of the Soviet, totally exhausted, stayed in the Tauride Palace to catch catnaps on unoccupied chairs and in corners of assembly halls. It had been a good day for them; many of them had emerged from obscurity to mount the crest of the revolutionary wave: vicissitudes so incredible they could not have been dreamed of in the morning. Yet the actions of the Soviet were yet to be tested by the reactions of the insurgents. Would they accept its authority? Or would they drag it in a more radical direction than the intellectual leaders intended to go? The die was cast, but what awaited them was not known. Did they go to sleep with the exhilarating sensation of hope that the revolution would bring or with the fear that the counterrevolutionary forces would crash the fragile revolution? History does not record what dreams they had, but I venture to guess that most of them had a sleepless night with the fear of counterrevolution.

however, to indicate that Shliapnikov raised any objection to the Executive Committee's decision at the first meeting. He could not have formulated a clear-cut policy toward the problem of power by this time.

The Formation of the Duma Committee

Duma Deputies Rushed to the Tauride Palace: Morning, 27 February

On the night of 26 February, Rodzianko had called for a private meeting of the Duma members to be held at 2:30 in the afternoon on 27 February as well as for a meeting of the Council of Elders – senioren convent – consisting of a representative of every party – prior to that meeting. But the news of the soldiers' insurrection drove many Duma deputies out of bed early. Many members rushed to the Tauride Palace by eight o'clock in the morning. It is there that they also learned about the imperial decree of the prorogation of the Duma.¹ Minute by minute, alarming news of the spread of soldiers' insurrection

1 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 8, d. 679, ch. III, 110; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 106; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 238; Lyanders 1997, pp. 126–7; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 138–9. In my 1981 edition (Hasegawa 1981), I stated that the Duma deputies assembled, provoked by the imperial decree of prorogation that had been issued on the previous night. New research by Lyandres and Nikolaev makes the convincing argument that the 'private' meeting and the Council of Elders' meeting had been scheduled before Rodzianko received the imperial decree of prorogation, and that the Duma deputies did not come to the Tauride Palace in reaction to the imperial decree. The record of the deliberation of the Duma deputies from the first Council of Elders meeting to the formation of the Provisional Government on 2 March was kept by V.N. Vershinin (Trudovik Duma deputy). His original draft was given to Ia.V. Glinka, head of the Duma Chancellery. Glinka further worked on the draft by incorporating the comments made by the participants. Glinka's draft was completed by September 1917 and handed to the State Printing Office publication, but the October Revolution intervened, and the record was never published. A copy of this revised draft was also given to Vershinin, who gave it to the Russian Historical Archives Abroad (Prague Archives) in Prague after his emigration. The entire Prague archives were captured by the Red Army during World War II, brought to Moscow, and kept at TsGAOR (now GARF), f. 5881, op. 2, op. 823, ll. 1–60. When I worked on the first book, I was not given permission to use this archival material, which was given to only two historians, Burdzhakov and Chermenskii. Thus, when I wrote the book, I had to rely on these two historians. The two versions of these minutes have become available. The first was Document 43 in the collection of documents on the February Revolution, edited by Shashkova in 1996. I refer to this document as 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996. The second, different version, was found by Nikolaev, who published it in 2012 as 'Protokol zasedanii', in *Tavrisheskie chteniia* 2011. I refer to this document as 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012. For the background of these two versions

were reported to the Duma members from various sources. By eleven o'clock the Duma deputies and other liberal activists wandered about the corridors of the Tauride Palace with concerned looks, gathered in small groups, and engaged in heated arguments on what action the Duma should take. Should the Duma defy the order of the tsar to prorogue the Duma – an act tantamount to joining the ranks of the insurgents? Or should it obey the order and quietly disperse while the insurrection was threatening to throw the entire city into chaos and anarchy? Shul'gin described the dilemma of the Duma deputies between 'the imperial decree of prorogation' and 'an approaching storm', but he knew that to accept the decree and disperse would 'lead to an abyss'.²

This dilemma also confronted the Kadets. A left-wing Kadet, S.V. Panina, stepdaughter of a famous zemstvo activist and a founder of the Kadet party, Ivan Petrunkevich, tried to persuade colleagues in her party to assume leadership of the insurrection, but her suggestion was met with silence. Afraid of involvement, the Kadet deputies shrugged their shoulders, and one remarked, 'Let them arrest the ministers first'. Miliukov and Shingarev remained non-committal.³

But the socialist deputies made their position clear from the very beginning. Anxious to seize this moment to persuade their Duma colleagues to take power against the regime by defying the imperial order of prorogation, they insisted that the Duma session should immediately be called. 'My first thought was that the Duma must be kept in session at all costs', Kerenskii recalls, 'and that close contact between the armed forces and the Duma must be established'. Kerenskii received the news of the soldiers' insurrection from Nekrasov, and when he went to the Duma, he met with Nekrasov, Efremov, Vershinin and Ckhkeidze, and formulated the position that the Duma should have the official session. According to Kerenskii, the gravity of leadership moved to the left-

and major differences of the two documents, see Nikolaev 2012, pp. 223–38. In addition to these documents, another valuable collection is the interviews conducted by the Society for the Study of the Revolution with the leading figures in the February Revolution. The interviews that were not published were kept in Georgia by Rusudana Nikoladze, Polievktov's widow. Nikoladze kept the manuscript of interviews secret, allowing only Burdzhakov to use it, and even then only partially. Thanks to Semion Lyandres's detective work and persistent negotiations, these interviews are now translated into English and have become available to researchers. For the Duma Committee in the February Revolution, see Nikolaev 2002, but most importantly Nikolaev, 2005, and its slightly different version, Nikolaev 2014.

2 Shul'gin 1925, pp. 154–5.

3 Diary of A. Tyrkova, quoted by Burdzhakov 1967, p. 226. V. Zaslavskii, 'V Gosudarstvennoi dume', *Krasnaia panorama*, 11 March 1927; Kerensky 1965, p. 195.

wing Duma deputies and the left-faction of the Progressive Bloc, specifically Chkheidze, Kerenskii, Skobelev, Nekrasov and Rzhnevskii.⁴

While the voices demanding the opening of the Duma grew louder, Rodzianko sat in his office. At one point Guchkov came in and conferred with him. About noon War Minister Beliaev telephoned and proposed to Rodzianko that in the name of national interest the Duma and the government act together to suppress the insurrection. 'When you are proroguing the Duma, what joint action is possible?' Rodzianko indignantly replied, 'There cannot be a common language from now on'. Beliaev suggested that Rodzianko should form a cabinet. The Chairman of the Duma dismissed this proposal: 'it's too late'.⁵ Among a number of options that the Duma could take, one option – cooperation with the government to suppress the insurrection – was ruled out.

Now it was up to the Council of Elders to decide what to do. But Rodzianko was not in a hurry to convene the meeting. The Chairman of the Duma locked himself in his office, and began composing a telegram to the tsar.⁶ Without Rodzianko, a group of deputies held an informal meeting around 11 a.m. in Room 11 under the chairmanship of Nekrasov and then Shidlovskii. Kerenskii and Skobelev repeated their demand that the Duma should take over leadership of the insurrection. Miliukov considered the Duma taking power 'a farce'.⁷ Nekrasov brought the news about the rebels taking over the Main Artillery Administration on Liteinyi. Tempers flared between those who supported the

4 Kerensky 1965, p. 195; Kerenskii interview in Lyandres 2013, p. 225. Kerenskii states in this interview that he and Nekrasov were in constant contact with each other. Nekrasov, however, curiously did not include Kerenskii among those whom he called by telephone to come to the Duma. Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 145. Skobelev learned about the insurrection from N.I. Iordanskii, a fellow Social Democrat, and immediately called Kerenskii, who had already left for the Duma. From these interviews, we know how closely Kerenskii, Skobelev, and Nekrasov were in touch with each other. Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 173.

5 RGIA, f. 1276, op. 8, d. 679, ch. I, ll, 110; Gerasimov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 91; Kulikov 2014, p. 180.

6 Burdzhakov 1967, p. 228; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 173.

7 According to Skobelev, Bonch-Bruевич called him, and told him that 'a group of public figures without party affiliation was in the process of being organised' and attempting to lead the insurrection. They proposed that 'the State Duma not disperse ... that it declare itself a national assembly and await the arrival of troops so that when the troops came, they would see people's representatives in place'. Skobelev thought that it would be 'imprudent for the whole Duma to declare itself a national assembly, but that it was necessary to assume power in order to stay in responsible positions and fulfill the mission imposed on us by the moment'. Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 163–74. It is not clear what Skobelev meant by 'a group of public figures'.

insurrection and those who cautioned about taking any step in support of the insurrection.⁸ Miliukov said that he could not formulate his position, since he did not know who was leading the insurrection. To this Skobelev countered that because the movement was still spontaneous, it was necessary for the Duma to provide leadership to turn it into an all people's revolutionary movement.⁹

Rodzianko Opens the Council of Elders' Meeting

Soon Rodzianko rushed to the meeting, fulminating about gathering illegally and without his permission. Somewhat soothed by the explanation that this was merely an informal meeting of deputies in a private capacity, Rodzianko finally agreed to hold an official meeting of the Council of Elders in his chamber. Altogether twenty-three members from all the Duma factions except for the right wing deputies participated.¹⁰

Rodzianko informed the members of the Council of Elders of the first telegram he had sent to the tsar on the previous night before he received the imperial decree of prorogation of the Duma, and then read the second telegram to the Tsar he had composed with Guchkov before noon. In this telegram he deplored the imperial decree of prorogation that deprived Petrograd of 'the last bulwark of order' in the face of the total powerlessness of the government 'to suppress the disturbances'. As a result, a civil war had begun in the streets in which the soldiers were killing their officers. Rodzianko begged the tsar to cancel the decree and to grant a ministry of confidence. It concluded: 'Sire, do not delay ... The hour that will decide the fate of Yourself and of the fatherland has come. Tomorrow it may already be too late'.¹¹ It was the last telegram Rodzianko sent to the tsar. Rodzianko's proposed solution – resignation of the current ministry, appointment of a ministry of confidence, and the continuing

8 Skobelev 1927, p. 1; Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 146; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 174; Nikolaev 2005, p. 121.

9 Nikolaev 2005, p. 121; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 175.

10 For careful estimates of how many participated in the Council of Elders' meeting, see Nikolaev 2005, 121–4.

11 'Vtoraia telegramma predsdatelia Gos. Dumy Tsariu', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, no. 1, 27 February 1917, p. 1; Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a, pp. 6–7; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 111; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 240; Document 16, Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 42. The record shows that this telegram was not sent until 12:40 p.m. Beliaev refused to send it so Rodzianko had it sent by direct wire in the post office. Rodzianko interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 108.

session of the Duma to play a role in the establishment of a ministry of confidence – was emerging in this telegram. What role Rodzianko thought the Duma should play, however, was not clear at this point.

Rodzianko then reported how the soldiers' revolt began with the Volynskii Regiment, and spread to the other regiments. Armed soldiers, joined by workers, were commandeering automobiles, and disarming the officers in the streets and in their apartments. The police had disappeared. He also informed the members of the Council of Elders that the students of the Military Medical Academy had come to him at 11 in the morning claiming to represent 25,000 troops, and asked him if the Duma would join the revolution.¹²

Having heard Rodzianko's report, the members of the Council of Elders argued that the events in Petrograd proved the complete powerlessness of the government. They agreed: 'This situation urgently demands that the State Duma immediately begin deliberations of measures to restore order and peace'. The left wing deputies – Kerenskii, Nekrasov, Efremov and Chkheidze demanded that the Duma hold the official session, defying the imperial decree, but Rodzianko remained adamant in rejecting their proposal, considering that defying the order of prorogation was tantamount to proclaiming the Duma to be a Constituent Assembly.¹³

But after one o'clock, there was the news that the insurgent soldiers were headed to the Tauride Palace.¹⁴ Colonel Bertgol'dt, deputy chief of the palace, rushed in. Informing everyone that the insurgents were moving toward the Duma, he asked the Duma Chairman what to do when they arrived at the palace. Rodzianko 'categorically and firmly' ordered the palace guard not to resist the arriving insurgent soldiers and not to use arms against them.¹⁵ Des-

12 According to 'Protokol sobytii', the delegates of 25,000 troops and students of the Military Medical Academy appeared at Rodzianko's office at 11 a.m. 'Protokol zasedanii' states that the students of the Military Medical Academy, as delegates of 25,000 troops, came to Rodzianko's office, but did not specify the time of their arrival. The arrival of the delegates of 25,000 troops was taken as the first arrival of the insurgent soldiers at the Tauride Palace and as such a crucial influence on Rodzianko's decision to accept the revolution. But as Nikolaev argues, there was a typographical error in 'Protokol sobytii', and Vershinin's original makes it clear that not the soldiers but only the students of the Military Medical Academy showed up. Nikolaev 2012, pp. 231–2. It should be noted that Rodzianko's report indicates that he possessed accurate information of the process of the insurrection, presumably obtained from the officers with whom he had established close contact.

13 Rodzianko interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 110.

14 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 126–7; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 175.

15 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 112; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 175.

pite his refusal to hold the regular Duma session, Rodzianko was clearly moving in the direction of accepting the insurrection.

Then, around 2 p.m., the Duma deputies learned that the insurgents had arrived at the gate of the palace compound. Kerenskii, Chkheidze and Skobelev, grabbing their fur coats, rushed to the gate. In confusion, despite Rodzianko's order, a guard soldier fired a shot at the crowds. There was a revolver shot in response from the crowds, wounding one of the guard soldiers. Skobelev ran back to Rodzianko asking for his permission to open the gate, and Rodzianko, calming down the excited Skobelev, ordered Bertgoldt to open the gate. The insurgents rushed inside the gate into the courtyard, assembling in front of the building. Kerenskii, Chkheidze, Skobelev and other deputies dashed to the entrance of the building to greet the arrival of the insurgents.¹⁶ As they went out to greet the insurgents, Kerenskii asked Miliukov what programme he should tell the crowd that the Duma was following. Miliukov answered: 'That was obvious'. Which one, Kerenskii asked. 'The programme of our [Progressive] Bloc'. Kerenskii threw his arms up in despair and exclaimed: 'What kind of programme is that? We can't really stop at that now!'¹⁷ As Kerenskii left, the chief of the palace guard, Captain A.A. Chikolini, burst into the hall, and reported the arrival of the insurgents, occupying all the entrances to the building, telephones and telegraphs, and placing their own guards in the palace.¹⁸ Now the insurgents were inside the building. The new developments led the Council of Elders to adopt the following resolution shortly before 2 p.m.: 'The State Duma is not to disperse [*ne raskhoditssia*]. All deputies are to remain in their places'.¹⁹ By not dispersing as directed by the decree of prorogation, the Duma took a decisive first step.

16 Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 175.

17 Tereshchenko interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 259.

18 Nikolaev 2012, p. 232; Gerasimov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 91.

19 'Reshenie G. Dumy', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, no. 1, 27 February 1917, p. 1. Nikolaev states in his 2005 book that this decision had the second part: 'The fundamental slogan of the moment is the abolition of the old power and its replacement with a new. The State Duma will take active participation in accomplishing this, but for this order and calm are essential above all'. Nikolaev 2005, p. 127. The second part of this resolution, which Nikolaev combined with the first part of resolution, was not reported in the same article, 'Reshenie', quoted by Nikolaev in *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, but in a different article, "'Delegatsiia revoliutsionnykh voisk v G. Dume', *ibid.*, p. 1. As I discuss later, it makes more sense to separate these two decisions taken at a different time, and interpret the first decision as the one taken by the Council of Elders before the beginning of the 'private meeting', as reported in *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurn-*

The Debate at the 'Private' Meeting

If the first act of the Duma's stand on the revolution was the Council of Elders' decision to have the Duma remain at its place without dispersing, the second act moved to the 'private meeting' of the Duma members in the Semicircular Hall that began at 2:30 in the afternoon.²⁰ The meeting of the 'private meeting' had been scheduled already on the previous night, but the soldiers' insurrection and the insurgents' arrival at the Tauride Palace drastically changed the nature of the meeting. Pointing out the seriousness of the situation, Rodzianko emphasised the need to come up with a definite measure to deal with the crisis, but added: 'we cannot as yet express ourselves definitely, because the correlation of forces is not yet known to us'.

alistov, and the second decision, sometime after the first contingent of soldiers arrived at the Tauride Palace after 2:30 p.m. Nikolaev in his 2012 article changes his view that the first part of the resolution was also taken at the private meeting, not at the Council of Elders. Nikolaev 2012, pp. 233, 242; Nikolaev/Polivanov 1997, pp. 131–2. Another discrepancy between 'Protokoly sobytii' and 'Protokoly zasedanii' is when Captain Chikolini came to report the takeover of the guard duty by the insurgents. According to 'Protokoly sobytii', it happened before the opening of the private meeting, but according to 'Protokoly zasedanii' this incident occurred after the opening of the private meeting. Lyandres first pointed out this discrepancy. Nikolaev writes in his 2012 introduction of 'protokoly zasedanii' that Chikolini burst into the assembly hall when the private meeting was ongoing, and connects Chikolini's appearance with the first resolution I introduced above. I disagree with Nikolaev here and take the 'Protokoly sobytii' at its face value, and I interpret that Chikolini's arrival took place during the Council of Elders' meeting, which led to its resolution that the Duma deputies should not disperse. After all, it corresponds to the article in *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*. Nikolaev 2012, pp. 232–3. As for who went to greet the insurgents, 'Protokol zasedanii' not only lists Kerenskii, Chkheidze, and Skobelev, but also 'some other Duma deputies'. Here I agree with Nikolaev who states that not only the socialist deputies but also other Duma deputies welcomed the arrival of insurgents, indicating the revolutionary character of the Duma, at least among some Duma liberals.

- 20 The account of the private meeting is based on the following sources: 'Iz zametok o pervykh dnyakh russkoi revoliutsii', *Volia Rossii*, 15 March 1921. Also see 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 113–15; Document 44, 'Protokol chastnogo soveshchaniia chlenov Gosudarstvennoi dumy', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, 146–8; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 238–44. The translation can be found in Browder/ Kerensky 1961, pp. 45–6. These are the minutes of the meeting recorded by an undisclosed attendant. We now know that the author of the transcript of the private meeting was P.V. Gerasimov. See Gerasimov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 92, footnote 9; Lyandres 2013, p. 99.

During the discussion the Duma deputies made various proposals under the pressure of time. Although it might be a little cumbersome, it might be helpful to describe these debates in detail to convey the pressure under which the Duma deputies debated and came to their conclusion.

The first speaker, Nekrasov, said that since there was no government, it was necessary to create one. He proposed establishing a military dictatorship headed by General A.A. Manikovskii, who had allegedly sympathised with the idea of a palace coup.²¹ M.A. Karaulov (Cossack group, independent) proposed the election of an executive commission charged with organisation of the government. Octobrist Savich proposed that the Chairman and the Secretariat of the Duma should be entrusted with the organisation of the government, but that instead of Manikovskii, General Polivanov should head the government. V.A. Rzhevskii (Progressist) urged his colleagues to make a decision immediately, since the disorder was spreading fast. To confirm his fear, the news was brought to the meeting that the insurgents had occupied the Petropavlovsk Fortress, had attacked the Kresty, freeing the prisoners from there, and had burned the Circuit Court. Rzhevskii then opposed Nekrasov's proposal, since it meant entrusting the government with the representative of the old regime. A Trudovik, V.I. Dziubinskii, argued that the Council of Elders should take power now and announce this move immediately to the people. Nekrasov's proposal met with strong objections from Kovalenko (Centre), who argued that it was tantamount to placing power again in the hands of the old regime. Nekrasov replied: 'Don't forget that the apparatus of power is still in the old hands, and we do not have it yet. Therefore, it is necessary to find a middle solution'. Chkhaidze called Nekrasov's proposal 'a false road'.

At this point two things happened. First, Rodzianko was called out for a telephone call from Golitsyn. The chairman of the Council of Ministers informed Rodzianko that he had requested the permission to resign and that the cabinet was now meeting at the Mariinskii Palace. Second, shortly before 3p.m. Kerenskii, who had been busy organising the new security guards from

21 According to Tereshchenko, Rodzianko, Guchkov, Konovalov, Miliukov, Shul'gin and Tereshchenko had a meeting, presumably before the private meeting. They agreed on the need to appoint officers so that the insurgents would be under the command of officers. Tereshchenko did not clearly state that this was the proposal that Manikovskii be appointed as the dictator. Their choice was General Manikovskii, but first they had to discover whether he was still alive. Then Guchkov and Tereshchenko walked from the Tauride Palace to General Manikovskii's apartment on Mokhovaia Street, where they found the general. But Manikovskii was non-committal about the appointment. Tereshchenko interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 259–60. See Chapter 23.

among the insurgents, returned to the meeting, and requested that he and Chkheidze be given authority to announce to the insurgent troops in the streets, in the name of the Duma, that 'the Duma had taken the responsibility into its own hands and that it stands at the head of the movement'.²² Chkheidze supported this proposal and stressed the necessity of destroying the old regime and creating a new one. Shingarev, a Kadet, expressed his doubt that the insurgents would recognise the authority of the Duma. But Shingarev's two fellow Kadets, N.K. Volkov and M.S. Adzhemov, disagreed. Volkov doubted that General Manikovskii, Nekrasov's candidate for the government, would enjoy sufficient authority among the insurgents. Adzhemov agreed with Volkov, and proposed that power should be entrusted with the special committee composed of ten Duma representatives, which should stand above the Duma.

It was at 3:10 p.m., when Miliukov, who had remained silent until then, spoke. The leader of the Progressive Bloc, pale and excited, appealed to the participants about the lack of clarity concerning the correlations of forces, about the extent of the insurrection, and about the reactions of the country and of the military leaders and soldiers in the front to the insurrections in Petrograd. He then outlined the three proposals presented and rejected each one. He could not agree with the proposal of the election of a committee, since such a committee could not have dictatorial power. Nekrasov's proposal would simply be inappropriate. The idea of creating the new government proposed by Dziubinskii and Chkheidze would be premature. He then stated:

Personally, I have no concrete suggestion. So, what can we do? To go [to the streets], as suggested by Kerenskii, and appease the troops? But this would hardly appease them; we must look for something more tangible.²³

What he had in mind was not clear, but he was sceptical about the government that would be formed from three alternatives. First, he no longer believed that a ministry of confidence – no matter what popular general headed the government – would be able to quell the revolution. Second, he was sceptical that the government that would be based on the insurgent masses would

22 Kerenskii, Chkheidze and Skobelev were absent at the beginning of the private meeting, since they were greeting the insurgent soldiers in the streets outside the Duma. Skobeliev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 177.

23 'Iz zametok o pervykh dniakh russkoi revoliutsii', *Volia Rossii*, 15 March 1921; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 114; Document 44, 'Protokol chastnogo soveshchaniia', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 147; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 243; Browder/ Kerensky 1961, p. 46.

accept the 'bourgeois' government composed of the privileged class. Third, he did not believe that any government that would grow out of the State Duma, which was the institution of the old regime, would be able to be an effective government. It is important to note that Miliukov believed that the government he envisaged should have dictatorial power. Then, what would be the solution? What did Miliukov mean by 'something more tangible?' As many colleagues were inclined to establish the Duma or the committee based on the Duma as a revolutionary power to accept the revolution, Miliukov clearly saw the looming danger. For one thing, as he pointed out, how the military leaders would react to the revolution in the capital was not at all clear, and closely connected with their policy was the position of the tsar and the potential forces that might rally behind him. Thus the leader of the Progressive Bloc was searching for the role that the liberals should play between the Scylla of the popular uprising and Charybdis of the counterrevolution.

But the soldiers' revolt pushed the Duma deputies leftward. A Kadet, V.I. Almazov, protested that the Duma could not afford to postpone the decision until the correlation of forces became clear. Dziubinskii said that there was no alternative but for the Duma to seize power, and proposed that the Duma declare itself the constituent assembly. S.P. Mansyrev, a Progressist, supported this proposal, but it was met with Savich's objection, who insisted on the role of the Duma as a legislative body. In this exchange, the question of whether the Duma should take the step of declaring itself the constituent assembly, a bona fide revolutionary power, or remain as a legislative institution within the constitutional structure of the Fundamental Laws, was raised in stark form.

Two hours had passed already, but the Duma deputies continued to argue. Kovalenko proposed the transfer of power to the Council of Elders. A Trudovik, N.O. Ianushkevich, advocated that the Duma declare itself united with the insurgent masses of workers and soldiers. Prince V.V. Shakhovskoi (Nationalist and Moderate Right) pointed out that the Duma had been prorogued, and therefore, the Council of Elders could elect a committee to which power could be transferred. But Shul'gin warned of the danger of yielding to popular pressures – 'Imagine that the insurgents would wish to end the war – we could not agree to accept this'. Nonetheless, he suggested that there were only two alternatives: the Nekrasov option (dictatorship headed by Manikovskii) or the Kovalenko option (the Duma declaring itself as the Constituent Assembly).

Rodzianko could no longer tolerate the endless argument and urged that they reach a conclusion promptly by voting on four proposals: (1) transfer of power to the Council of Elders (proposed by Dziubinskii); (2) the formation of a special committee (supported by Kovalenko, Shakhoskoi, Shul'gin); (3) a proclamation of the Duma as a constituent assembly (proposed by Dzi-

ubinskii, and supported by Rzheshhevskii, Mansyrev, and presumably by Kerenskii, Chkheidze and Ianushkevich); and (4) the election of a commission to be charged with organisation of the government (proposed by Volkov and Adzhemov).²⁴ Interestingly, Rodzianko excluded three ideas that were floated on the floor. First, he did not include Nekrasov's idea of forming a government under Manikovskii or Polivanov (suggested by Kovalenko). Second, he did not entertain Miliukov's idea of doing nothing. Doing nothing was not an option for Rodzianko. Contrary to the portrayal of the Chairman of the Duma as a waverer and more conservative than Miliukov, Rodzianko was willing to go farther to the left than the leader of the Progressive Bloc, who had dominated the liberal movement until the February insurrection. Third, he excluded Savich's proposal to entrust the Chairman of the Duma and its Secretariat with governmental power. Although Savich's reasoning for this proposal was to maintain the character of the Duma as a legislative power under the Fundamental Laws, Rodzianko must have feared that this would be a slippery slope toward the Duma declaring itself a constituent assembly.

While any of the proposals except the second would have committed the Duma to assuming power, the advantage of the second proposal was in its non-committal stand. In view of the overwhelming sentiment at the meeting in favour of forming a government based on the Duma, Miliukov supported this proposal, because 'while satisfying the tasks of the moment, it did not pre-determine anything for the future'. Despite strong objections from the left, the majority approved the second proposal, the formation of a special committee, the selection of the members of which was entrusted to the Council of Elders. The minutes of the private meeting stated the decision as follows:

The private meeting of the deputies of the State Duma came to the conclusion of the necessity of electing a Provisional Committee and entrusting it with the obligation to follow the development of events and take appropriate measures including the assumption of executive power upon itself, if this becomes necessary.²⁵

Therefore, despite Miliukov's view, what was supposed to be formed was not simply a committee, but the Provisional Committee, to be elected by the Coun-

24 Document 44, 'Protokol chastnogo soveshchaniia', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 148. For the reasons for Nekrasov's proposal to establish a military dictatorship under General Manikovskii, see Chapter 23.

25 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 114; for slightly different wording, see 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 243–4.

cil of Elders; and this did not exclude the possibility of assuming power '*when it becomes necessary*' (italics by TH).

In a separate article from the one that introduced the Council of Elders' 'Duma not to disperse' resolution, *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnal-istov* reported that the Duma deputies had adopted another resolution: 'The fundamental slogan of the moment is the abolition of the old power and its replacement with a new. The State Duma will take active participation in accomplishing this, but for this order and calm are essential above all'.²⁶ The second resolution was not included in either version of the minutes of the private meeting. If this resolution was actually adopted, its timing becomes a crucial issue. Since the private meeting of the Duma members avoided the decision to take power, it is doubtful that they adopted the second resolution at the time when they decided to form the Provisional Committee of the State Duma.

The distance between these two resolutions was enormous. The Duma made the first revolutionary step by deciding 'not to disperse' in defiance of the imperial order of prorogation. But sometime after the formation of the Duma Committee, the private meeting took another big step by adopting the second resolution that defined the current task as that of overthrowing the government and replacing it with a new one. Nevertheless, this was merely the 'hop' and 'step' of the triple jump, still lacking the last decisive step of 'jump' – the assumption of power.

The 'private' meeting was not the official Duma session, and therefore technically it did not violate the imperial order of prorogation. But the Duma was clearly moving in the direction of establishing revolutionary power. Nonetheless, the private meeting rejected the decisive 'jump' of declaring itself a constituent assembly, as Rzhnevskii, Dziubinskii and other Trudoviks insisted. In refusing even to entertain Savich's idea, they were cutting the umbilical cord with the State Duma as the legislative body anchored in the Fundamental Laws. And yet the Duma deputies did not dare to take the decisive step of declaring the Duma a constituent assembly. Such a decisive measure, before the formation of the Petrograd Soviet, would have enhanced the prestige of the Duma

26 'Delegatsiia revoliutsionnykh voisk v G. Dume', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnal-istov*, no. 1, 27 February 1917, p. 1. Startsev and Nikolaev treat the 'not to disperse' resolution and the 'abolition of the old power' resolution as if they were the decisions taken simultaneously. Startsev 1980, p. 23; Nikolaev 2005, p. 137. In contrast, Arkhipov takes the position that there actually was not a second resolution, and that this was only added later to emphasise the revolutionary nature of the Duma Committee after the revolution. Arkhirov 2000, p. 93.

and the Duma Committee as the bona fide revolutionary power, thus removing the nagging question of legitimacy that was to haunt the Duma Committee and subsequently the Provisional Government. The question was raised: if the body was created by the 'private' meeting of the Duma deputies, from what source did the Duma Committee derive its authority? Had the private meeting decided to declare itself a constituent assembly or a new state power, taking the legislative and executive power into its own hands, the question of legitimacy would have been less problematical. But the Duma leaders who gathered at the private meeting were not as bold as their forefathers of the Third Estate of French Revolution, who declared themselves to be the National Assembly on 20 June 1789, and went on to enact revolutionary laws as the revolutionary power. There was no oath of the Semicircular Hall at the Tauride Palace that was comparable to the Tennis Court Oath during the French Revolution. 'The Duma's failure to announce an official session', Kerenskii laments in his memoirs, 'was tantamount to committing political suicide at the very moment when its authority was at its height in the country and the army'.²⁷

Formation of the Duma Committee

By five o'clock in the afternoon, the Council of Elders selected the twelve members of a committee with a ridiculously long name – 'the Provisional Committee of the Members of the State Duma for the Restoration of Order in the Capital and the Establishment of Relations with Public Organisations and Institutions' – which I henceforth call the Duma Committee. The members of the committee were: Rodzianko (Octobrist), Nekrasov (Kadet), Dmitriukov (Octobrist), V.Z. Rzhevskii (Progressist), Shul'gin (Nationalist), Miliukov (Kadet), Kerenskii (Trudovik), Chkheidze (Menshevik), Konovalov (Progressist), Karaulov (non-party), V.N. L'vov (Centrist), and Shidlovskii (Octobrist).²⁸ Later Colonel B.A. Engel'gardt (Octobrist) was added to the list.

Basically the Duma Committee consisted of the representatives of the Progressive Bloc with two notable additions: Kerenskii and Chkheidze. The Duma

27 Kerensky 1965, p. 196. One might note that except for a brief moment, Kerenskii was absent from the proceedings of the private meeting. Presumably, he was organising his revolutionary staff outside the Semicircular Hall. Regardless of what decision the private meeting might take, Kerenskii made sure that the insurgents were turning the Duma into the centre of the revolution.

28 'Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Dumy dlia vodvoreniia poriadka v Petrograde i dlia snosheniia s uchrezhdeniiami i litsami', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, no. 1, 27 Feb-

liberals considered the inclusion of these two socialists essential to establishing contact with the insurgents. The private meeting was summoned again to approve the formation of the Duma Committee. A proposal was made to turn the Duma Committee into a Provisional Government, but Miliukov strenuously opposed this proposal, stating that the task of the Duma Committee should be 'temporary and special', but the Provisional Government should be selected by different criteria.²⁹ The private meeting then adopted the Trudovik V.M. Ver-shinin's proposal that 'the members of the Duma, without any differences of party affiliations, give their promise to support and cooperate with the Provisional Committee of the State Duma in all its actions that it will take in the future'.³⁰ According to Nikolaev, Miliukov's attempt to limit the activities of the Duma Committee was rejected, and the Duma members at the private meeting granted the Duma Committee the power authorised not only to 'act in solidarity with the insurgents, but also to stand at the head of the insurrection and the revolution'. The inclusion of Kerenskii and Chkheidze was the guarantee for this authority. The radicals won, but still the Duma deputies hesitated to take the last decisive step of assuming power.³¹

The formation of the Duma Committee was immediately announced in the Tauride Palace, where the insurgents who had gathered in the palace greeted this news with enthusiasm. The news of its formation was also posted throughout the city, and an announcement listing the Duma Committee members was widely distributed from automobiles to the citizens. This was the first revolutionary act of the Duma Committee directly addressing the insurgents.³² The insurrection found its centre. And the Duma Committee, taking advantage of the enormous technical means – telephones, printing facilities, typewriters, automobiles – spread its intention throughout the city to stand at the head of the revolution.

ruary 1917, p. 1; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 244. Wildman, like myself in 1981, underestimates the revolutionary character of the Duma Committee. Wildman 1980, p. 166, 173.

29 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 244. Whether this proposal was made at the meeting of the Duma Committee or at the private meeting is not clear. 'Protokol sobytii' does not mention anything about this proposal.

30 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1998, p. 137; Nikolaev 2005, p. 145.

31 Nikolaev 2005, p. 145. It is possible to speculate that the second resolution printed in *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhuralistov*, mentioned above, was adopted at this meeting.

32 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 115; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 145–6.

The Duma Committee Leaders: Rodzianko, Miliukov and Kerenskii

Rodzianko became chairman of the Duma Committee by virtue of his position as Chairman of the State Duma. For the first few days of its existence all activities of the Duma Committee revolved around Rodzianko's personal decisions. Another leader of the Duma Committee was Miliukov, who was to steer the course of the Duma Committee after Rodzianko's influence began to wane.

The third important leader was Kerenskii. More than Rodzianko and Miliukov, Kerenskii embodied the essence of the February Revolution. He had called for the Duma to take power during the February strike movements, and invited the insurgent soldiers to enter the Tauride Palace. While Rodzianko and Miliukov were slow to react to the fast moving events, and while his socialist colleague, Chikheidze, was in and out of the Tauride Palace because of his severe cold, Kerenskii, a thirty-five year old Trudovik leader, took actions to drive the events in a direction he had planned. He greeted the insurgents with his fiery speeches, organised them into a revolutionary staff, issued orders, and tirelessly moved from one place to another. Straddling over the two camps – the Duma Committee and the Petrograd Soviet – he grew in every moment in stature and prestige. And he was conscious of his role, and cultivated the myth-making himself. Drunk with success of every step that he took, 'he was transformed into the leader of the revolution', and he also transformed the revolution. He had the advantage of having capable self-appointed adjutants from the General Staff, G.N. Tumanov and G.A. Iakubovich. The February Revolution was Kerenskii's revolution.³³

The difference in political views held by the members of the Duma Committee was immense. A deep gulf separated Kerenskii, representing the left, from Shul'gin on the right. Kerenskii unquestioningly welcomed the insurrection, in which he saw 'the spirit of unity, fraternity, mutual confidence, and self-sacrifice, welding all of us into a single fighting body'. He believed that the Duma, in obtaining the confidence of the people, had reached the highest point of its strength. In contrast, Shul'gin felt 'a malicious fury' when he witnessed the 'disgusting' scene of insurgents pouring into the Tauride Palace. 'Machine guns – that is what I wanted', he reminisced. 'Only the language of machine guns was accessible to the crowds in the streets ... only it, the lead, could drive

33 For the role of Kerenskii during the February Revolution, as compared with the image of a weak and often hysterical leader as presented in many biographies, see Lyandres 2013, pp. 219–10, For Kerenskii's adjutants, see Lyandres 2013, p. 240.

this dreadful beast back to its den'. He held a more realistic view than Kerenskii of the real strength of the Duma. According to Shul'gin, the Duma's pretence of holding power had developed simply because 'the people hailed the Duma as a *symbol of the revolution*, but not from respect for the Duma itself'.³⁴

Despite this wide range of political differences, the members of the Duma Committee shared two goals: a fundamental change in the state structure had to be implemented, and the revolution had to be prevented from going beyond controllable limits. As for the first goal, they did not yet have a clear idea as to how far they should go: the establishment of a ministry of confidence, a responsible ministry, or abdication of the tsar, or the end of the monarchy? And the choice of their alternatives would be determined by the second goal. What political choice would be necessary to prevent the revolution from going further and destroying the entire state structure?

At this moment the dilemma of the liberals in wartime politics manifested itself in the sharpest form. Led by Miliukov, the liberal mainstream had refused to take decisive action against the government for fear that such action might touch off a revolution from below. The radical wing of the liberals had advocated more active cooperation with the mass movement so as to contain it within reasonable limits. Out of desperation a small group headed by Guchkov had plotted a palace coup. A common thread running through all these differing liberal stances was to try to prevent a revolution, but if it were to come, to keep it within reasonable bounds.

Moderate socialists, who had gathered in the Left Bloc, had been in complete agreement with this goal. But on the afternoon of 27 February the insurrection was an established fact. The little space that the liberals and the moderate socialists had chosen during the war was quickly becoming smaller, squeezed between the revolution and the old regime. Shingarev stated. 'The Duma was still standing between the "people" and the "government". Both sides still recognised it for the time being'.³⁵ But the events in the streets and inside the Tauride Palace inexorably pushed the liberals onto the side of the revolution, and even the moderate liberals such as Miliukov and Shingarev, in spite of themselves, found themselves on the side of the revolution.³⁶

34 Kerensky 1927, p. 21, Shul'gin 1925, pp. 163, 177–8.

35 Quoted in Shul'gin 1925, p. 153.

36 The usually conservative State Council also gingerly supported the revolutionary actions of the State Duma. On 28 February, twenty-three elected members of the State Council sent a telegram to the emperor to immediately call the legislative session, remove the current Council of Ministers and entrust a person who enjoyed the confidence of people to head the new Council of Ministers. They supported the formation of the Duma Commit-

The Socialist Deputies Attempt to Control the Insurgent Soldiers

The first wave of insurgents, numbering 30,000, arrived at the Tauride Palace around 2 p.m. Before their arrival, as mentioned above, Rodzianko had given the Commander of the Guard his order not to resist the insurgents and not to use arms against them. There are conflicting versions of what really happened when the insurgent masses came to the Tauride Palace, but the most likely version was that the masses of insurgents filling Shpalernaia Street in front of the Tauride Palace attempted to push through the iron gates. Despite Rodzianko's order the guard on duty fired a shot, killing a soldier. Angered, the insurgents fired several shots against the guard, killing one guard and wounding a chief of guard, Ensign Medvedev, at the gate. The crowds poured into the courtyard of the palace. Kerenskii, Chikheidze and Skobelev, along with unidentified Duma deputies, rushed out of the private meeting and greeted the assembled insurgents.³⁷

The soldiers welcomed their speeches with approving shouts, but asked repeatedly: 'Where is the new power? Where is the new government?' 'The members of the State Duma have not decided to take power in their hands', Skobelev replied, 'We are putting pressure on them'. He stressed the importance of organisation and discipline, and appealed to the insurgents to organise themselves to create revolutionary order.³⁸ Kerenskii delivered a fiery speech, shouting, 'Soldiers, the State Duma is with you!'³⁹ These speeches played an important role in directing the insurgents to the Tauride Palace. It was these socialist deputies who led the insurgent soldiers from the courtyard inside the building and placed the palace under the revolutionary guard some time between 2 and 3 p.m. Especially important was the role of Kerenskii, who himself led a detachment of soldiers and replaced the old guard soldiers with the new revolutionary honour guard to protect the palace, instructing them where the sentinels should be posted.⁴⁰

tee. The State Council was following the coattails of the Duma and accepted the revolution. Nikolaev 2005, pp. 366–7.

37 For different versions of the events at the gate of the Tauride Palace, see Nikolaev 2005, pp. 181–4. See 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 112; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 241; Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 74–5.

38 Skobelev 1927, p. 1; 'Revoliutsionnaia armia v Gos. Dume', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistsov*, no. 1, 27 February; Rafes 1922, p. 186; Nikolaev 2005, 184–5.

39 Nikolaev 2005, p. 185.

40 Kerensky 1965, p. 197; Rafes 1922, p. 186; Shul'gin 1925, p. 181; Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 226; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 187–8.

By late afternoon on 27 February the Duma deputies were witness to an unprecedented scene. Usually impeccable order and decorum ruled in the Duma. Couriers always stood at the doors of the large halls, and uniformed guards of the palace walked ceremoniously in the corridors. But on that afternoon the Tauride Palace became an extension of the streets in turmoil. The sumptuous Ekaterina Hall, the Circular Hall and all corridors were filled with soldiers, workers and students. In the Circular Hall weapons taken from regimental arsenals and those confiscated from the police were piled up. There was a broken machine gun, and next to it a corpse of a soldier of the Semenovskii Regiment was unceremoniously laid, presumably killed at the first skirmish at the gate, with a bullet hole in his temple. Against the walls all sorts of plunder was stacked up. On a heap of sacks of barley and flour lay the carcass of a pig. The noise was deafening. The members of the Duma stood appalled at the gigantic crowds that had violated the palace and who were behaving as though it were the site of a great festival.⁴¹ And among these unruly insurgent soldiers Kerenskii leapt into action with incredible energy, like a possessed man, to make a revolutionary staff.

Kerenskii Establishes a 'Revolutionary Staff'

Kerenskii took the initiative in organising the initial 'revolutionary staff' in the Duma. The first task was to guard the Tauride Palace. The honorary guards Kerenskii had set up lasted only a few minutes and then disappeared. B.G. Sergiev, a barrister, who had assembled a detachment of soldiers, arrived and offered Kerenskii his service to organise the guard duty for the palace. Thus, Sergiev became the first chief of the palace guard – commandant – establishing the outer guard to defend the building as well as inner guards to protect telephones, equipment and furniture. Kerenskii set the newly arrived soldiers on guard posts. The old guard did not leave, but the guardroom was taken without a fight, and the old guard ended up merging into the revolutionary guard. Especially important was the security of telephones, and for that purpose the 'telephone committee' consisting of women students was created.⁴² Soon the security zone was expanded to the whole area surrounding the Tauride Palace. Kirpichnikov, the ringleader of the revolt of the Volynskii Regiment, received the order

41 Engel'gardt, *OR GBL*, d. 218, l. 104.

42 Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 226.

to protect the palace and the surrounding area.⁴³ A detachment of soldiers led by V.I. Charnoluskii (Popular SR) was sent to occupy a water supply station on Kerenskii's order, where they overcame the resistance of the guard, and secured water supply to the insurgents who gathered at the Tauride Palace.⁴⁴

The centre of activities was without question Kerenskii. On this afternoon, Sukhanov witnessed Kerenskii sitting in front of a big desk in the vestibule not far from the left wing of the Tauride Palace, giving his orders to soldiers and civilians who came to him to seek instructions. Shul'gin also noted that various armed people came through the crowd of people to seek Kerenskii's instructions as to what to do to 'defend freedom'.⁴⁵

The most urgent task was to organise the insurgent soldiers roaming in the streets and direct them to the Tauride Palace. As mentioned above, at the private meeting of the Duma deputies, Kerenskii requested at 2:57 p.m. that he and Chkheidze be dispatched by a car to all the insurgent troops to announce that the Duma supported their revolt and to offer its solidarity to the insurgents.⁴⁶ Whether this proposal met with the approval of the private meeting is not clear, but Kerenskii left the meeting and drove around the city to organise the insurgent soldiers and urge the soldiers in the units who had not revolted to join the insurrection in support of the Duma.⁴⁷ Typed announcements that reported that the revolutionary staff had been established at the State Duma in the Tauride Palace were posted around the city. It is important to note that these announcements were posted around 5 p.m. even before the first Soviet session was held.⁴⁸

Kerenskii's staff also established strategic points in various districts, gathering the hastily organised military detachments composed of insurgent soldiers. A military detachment was sent to capture the armoury of the armoured car division on Znamenskaia Street where 97 machine guns and thousands of revolvers were stored.⁴⁹ Chkheidze and Skobelev appealed to the insurgents to seize automobiles for the use of the revolution. The automobiles captured by the insurgents were driven to the courtyard of the Tauride Palace. Ker-

43 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 190–1.

44 Nikolaev 2005, p. 193.

45 Sukhanov 1922, p. 82; Shul'gin 1925, p. 186; Zaslavskii/Kantorovich 1924, p. 30, Nikolaev 2005, p. 197.

46 Document 44, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 147.

47 Nikolaev 2005, p. 192, based on A.S. Ruch'evskii, *Fevral'-Oktiabr' 1917 g.: Vospominaniia Ruch'evskogo*, TsGAIPD SPB, f. 4000, op. 5, d. 1334, l. 2.

48 Nikolaev 2005, p. 193.

49 Nikolaev 2005, p. 194; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 258.

enskii later recalled that this revolutionary staff was led by himself, Skobelev, Chkeidze and Nekrasov.⁵⁰

Kerenskii's staff served as an organisation that was to develop into the Duma Committee's Military Commission, which was established around 7 p.m. on that day. It was created by Kerenskii on his own personal initiative without the approval of the Duma Committee and without the approval of the private meeting of the Duma deputies.

The Duma Committee Establishes the Military Commission

Up to this time, Kerenskii's revolutionary staff relied on ad hoc measures to organise the insurgents, but shortly before 7 p.m. two events took place that led to the formation of the Military Commission under the Duma Committee. Around this time, a member of the Duma deputy, M.M. Ichas [Kadet], convened a meeting of the Duma deputies attended by 150 members, and at his initiative, he created various commissions, distributing the tasks among members. One of the commissions was the Military Commission.⁵¹ Also shortly before 7 p.m., the Reserve First Infantry Regiment with more than 200 officers and 12,000 soldiers, led by Colonel K.F. Luchivka-Neslukhovskii, came to join the Duma in full military formation.⁵² This was a decisive moment. The Duma Committee had a full regiment with 200 officers with military discipline at its disposal. With this regiment in perfect battle formation, Kerenskii's staff was now transformed into the Military Commission, bearing the clear appearance of the staff to guide the insurrection.⁵³ It is important to note that the Duma Committee's Military Commission had been formed before the Petrograd Soviet created its own Military Commission under Mstislavskii.⁵⁴

Kerenskii continued to order the various available military units to take measures to control strategic places in the city. He sent a few units to occupy railway stations, the Okhrana headquarters and the gendarme administra-

50 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 193–4; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 178.

51 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 195–6, quoting M. Ichas, '27 i 28 fevralia 1917 goda: Moi vospominaniia', *Poslednie novosti*, 12 March 1927.

52 Nikolaev 2013, pp. 25–7.

53 Kerensky 1965, p. 200; Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 227–8; Nikolaev 2005, p. 196; Nikolaev 2013, pp. 25–7.

54 Nikolaev 2005, p. 195, quoting Kerenskii's statement on July 1917, 'The work of the Military Commission began and developed outside of any dependence on the Soviet of Workers' Deputies'.

tion.⁵⁵ By this time Rodzianko also joined the efforts to direct the insurgents to the Duma, by appealing to the officers of liberal orientation to support the insurrection and lead the insurgents in support of the Duma.⁵⁶ Rodzianko was moving inch by inch toward his eventual decision to take power.

The use of armoured cars became a crucial instrument by which the Military Commission suppressed the resistance of the police and forced the remaining military units to join the insurrections. The soldiers at the workshops in the Armoured Car Division at Bol'shaia Possadskaia Street joined the revolt, making eight armoured cars at the disposal of the Military Commission. Leiberov identifies two Bolsheviks, one G.V. Elin of the Putilov Factory, and another I.F. Kodatskii, who had just been liberated from the Kresty Prison to 'remove' the armoured division soldiers. The insurgent soldiers seized the Kshesinskaia villa, forcing the emperor's former lover, a famous ballet dancer, to flee with her infant son and a dog.⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that Elin, a Bolshevik, directed the armoured cars to the Tauride Palace rather than to Finland Station.⁵⁸ Also the soldiers in the repair shop, Benz, at Malaia Dvorienskaia Street decided to join the revolution around 9 p.m., suppressed the resistance of the guard, and drove ten armoured cars to the Tauride Palace. According to Viktor Shklovskii, who served in the armoured car division, sixteen to seventeen armoured cars were driven to the Tauride Palace, adding on the way six additional broken cars taken from the repair workshop at Mikhailovskii garage.⁵⁹ Some of these armoured cars took independent actions, driving around the city, while others received specific instructions to fulfil the Duma Committee's orders.⁶⁰

The Duma Committee's Military Commission was quick to organise the sanitary commission. Professor V.A. Iurevich of the Military Medical Academy was instrumental in organising sanitary detachments composed of medical students and gymnasium students. Three sanitary points were established inside the Tauride Palace, while hastily formed sanitary detachments were dispatched to strategic points in the city. These sanitary departments not only administered

55 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 197–8.

56 According to Skobelev, Rodzianko was already active trying to steer liberal minded officers to the Duma to support the revolution. Skobelev, '25 fevralia–3 marta [vospominaniia byvshego] chlena sotsial-demokraticheskoi fraktsii Gosudarstvennoi Dumy M. Skobelev', *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 11 March 1917, quoted by Nikolaev 2005, p. 196.

57 Kshessinska 2005, pp. 164–5.

58 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, pp. 224, 245; Nikolaev 2005 pp. 206–7.

59 Nikolaev 2005, 207–8.

60 Nikolaev 2005, p. 210.

first-aid to the wounded, but also provided important information on the constantly developing situation in the city.⁶¹

Rodzianko Urges Grand Duke Mikhail to Assume the Regency

While the Duma Committee began to assume revolutionary power, Rodzianko was trying to assert the leadership of the revolution, hoping to restore order in the capital through negotiations involving the grand dukes. He tried to persuade Nicholas's brother, Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, to assume a temporary regency in Petrograd with the help of the Duma and to establish a ministry replacing the old government. There are still unresolved questions and conflicting accounts about Rodzianko's attempt to mobilise the grand duke to establish a new government on the evening of 27 February, but this episode is important in understanding Rodzianko's position with regard to the emerging political power and the complicating power dynamics within the Duma Committee.

Rodzianko called the grand duke in Gatchina around 3 o'clock in the afternoon to set up a meeting with Mikhail at the Mariinskii Palace.⁶² At six o'clock in the evening Rodzianko, Nekrasov, Dmitriukov and N.V. Savich went to the Mariinskii Palace to meet the grand duke.⁶³ The Duma delegates were not

61 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 210–11.

62 According to the interview with the Polievkov commission, Rodzianko stated that the Grand Duke had called him from Gatchina on 26 February, and met him at the Mariinskii Palace in the evening of 26 February before he was handed the decree of the prorogation of the Duma.

63 Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 146. The composition of the members is puzzling. Rodzianko (Chairman of the Duma), Nekrasov (Vice-Chairman), and Dmitriukov (Secretary) represented the Duma's Presidium and the Secretariat, but it is not known why Savich was included. Savich states in his memoirs that this meeting had the approval of the Duma Committee. Savich 1993, pp. 200–1. But it is questionable. Although he was a member of the Council of the Elders, he was not included in the members of the Duma Committee. At the private meeting, Savich took a conservative position, entrusting the Duma Presidium and the Secretariat to make a decision on power, but opposing the assumption by the Duma of power beyond its legislative power under the Fundamental Laws. It is doubtful that those Duma members who had advocated the position that the Duma should declare itself as a constituent assembly approved the negotiations with the grand duke. It is possible to assume that Rodzianko's negotiations with the grand duke did not have the formal approval of all the members the Duma Committee, and that Savich, as Rodzianko's close colleague, was added at the last minute.

unanimous about the purpose of approaching the grand duke. It should be noted that Nekrasov had advocated the establishment of a military dictatorship headed by Manikovskii at the private meeting, and Savich proposed Polivanov instead. Nonetheless, they agreed on the need to form a government led by a popular military leader. Their position was therefore not necessarily in agreement with the resolution adopted by the private meeting. As Nekrasov stated at the private meeting, they felt that a halfway measure was necessary. Rodzianko's motivation may not have been identical with Nekrasov's. It is possible to think that his approach to the grand duke was a continuation of the pressure on Nicholas to form a ministry of confidence, and that he was now pursuing by other means the same goal for which he had pleaded in his last telegram to the tsar. Neither Rodzianko nor Nekrasov appears to have conceived their approach to the grand duke as a radical solution; that is, as a way of establishing a revolutionary government directed against the tsar's power and entrenched in the military.

The Duma representatives drove to Mariinskii Palace to meet the grand duke. There are conflicting accounts as to what the Duma delegates proposed to the grand duke and what the grand duke agreed to. According to the record of the Duma Committee, Rodzianko and the Duma delegates presented the following argument:

The only way to save the country was to transfer power to different hands. At the present moment there remains only one alternative: to transfer power to the State Duma, which can form a government sufficiently authoritative for calming the country. Time is urgent, and if this is not done today, tomorrow may be too late.

To this the grand duke answered that he had no power to sanction such measures. He wanted to consult Golitsyn.

The Grand Duke and Rodzianko then met Golitsyn. According to the record of the Duma Committee, Rodzianko demanded the resignation of the current ministry and the transfer of power to the Duma Committee as the only measure to avoid the impending anarchy. Golitsyn explained that he had already sent his petition to the tsar tendering his resignation. He was ready to resign, but until he received permission from the tsar he had no legal right to transfer power to anyone. To this Rodzianko replied that with such a declaration it was likely that the entire cabinet would be arrested.⁶⁴

64 'Protocol sobytiĭ', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 116; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012,

After his meeting with Golitsyn, Mikhail returned to the room where the Duma deputies were waiting. What the Duma deputies proposed to the grand duke and what Mikhail agreed is not entirely clear. According to Nekrasov, he suggested that the grand duke assume

the regency temporarily until the arrival of the emperor from the Stavka, dismiss the Council of Ministers, and place at the head of the administration a Provisional Government consisting of the men of society with a popular general at its head.⁶⁵

This is consistent with what he had proposed at the private meeting. According to Rodzianko, however, he claimed that he had urged the grand duke to establish a dictatorship in Petrograd 'on his own initiative', and to demand from the emperor 'a manifesto for the formation of a responsible ministry'.⁶⁶ Mikhail responded that he could not take such action without agreement from the emperor.

By ten o'clock Mikhail finally agreed to accept Rodzianko's proposal and assume the regency, but only if the course of events made it absolutely inevitable. Shortly before 10 p.m. the grand duke, together with Beliaev, went to the war minister's residence to contact the Stavka through the Hughes telegraphic apparatus. When Mikhail requested a direct conversation with Nicholas, however, the emperor refused, sending General Alekseev instead. In this direct wire, the grand duke urged the emperor to dismiss the current council of ministers and appoint a person 'enjoying the confidence of His Majesty and the respect of wide circles', and to entrust him with the appointment of a new government. The grand duke further requested that the tsar grant the grand duke the authority to announce this on his behalf.⁶⁷

p. 245. According to Golitsyn, he implored Mikhail to assume the regency at this meeting. Deposition of Golitsyn, *Padenie* 1925, vol. 2, pp. 266, 267.

65 Rodzianko 1922, p. 57; Rodzianko interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 109–10; Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 146–7; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 115–16; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 245–6.

66 Rozianklo 1922, p. 57; Document 17, Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 42. According to the record of the Duma Committee, Savich and Dmitriukov told the grand duke that 'the course of events demand the removal of emperor Nicholas II from power and assumption of regency by Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich'.

67 *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, pp. 11–12; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 86; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 148–9; Document 79, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 208–10; Gaida 2003, p. 298; Kulikov 2014a, pp. 182–3.

Later, Rodzianko blamed the grand duke for timidly retreating from the previously accepted agreement to establish a military dictatorship under his regency. But in the situation of 27 February, it is quite unlikely that Rodzianko would have urged the grand duke to establish a military dictatorship against the will of the emperor, or to pit the illegitimate regency against the legitimate power of the emperor. Despite Rodzianko's claim, it makes more sense to interpret that what Grand Duke Mikhail proposed in the direct wire was more or less in accordance with the agreement he had reached with the Duma deputies.⁶⁸

What is important in the grand duke's direct wire to Alekseev was that he proposed Prince L'vov rather than Rodzianko to head the ministry of confidence. The grand duke had maintained two channels with the Duma liberals, though not directly; one including Guchkov and Miliukov, and another through Rodzianko.⁶⁹ Therefore it was not surprising that Rodzianko suggested his regency. But what was surprising was that instead of Rodzianko, he proposed Prince L'vov to head the ministry of confidence. The biographers of Mikhail suggest that the Grand Duke, who had been in touch with political developments in Gatchina, 'knew that the majority Progressive Bloc in the Duma had already opted for Prince L'vov', without providing any evidence.⁷⁰ In contrast, the Duma Committee's record stressed the significance of the Duma and the Duma Committee, though without specifically referring to Rodzianko by name. Miliukov and the Progressive Bloc favoured the formation of a government outside the Duma, representing society, and for that purpose, L'vov was the preferred candidate to head the future government. The fact that L'vov's name appeared at this early stage indicates that the power struggle between Rodzianko and Miliukov had already begun. It is possible to argue that it was not Mikhail's easy capitulation to Nicholas's intransigence, but rather his suggestion of L'vov that deeply offended Rodzianko. This disappointment was to influence Rodzianko's attitude to the grand duke later, when Mikhail had to make a decision as to whether he should assume the throne.

When Alekseev commented that the tsar was scheduled to leave for Tsarskoe Selo on the following day, Mikhail replied that the departure should be delayed

68 Rosemary and Daniel Crawford, biographers of Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, argue that Rodzianko's attempt would have pitted Mikhail and his illegal government against Nicholas and his lawful government, an option that Mikhail could not possibly accept or contemplate. Crawford/Crawford 1997, p. 261. But it is more likely that Rodzianko employed the grand duke's pressure to extract Nicholas's concession.

69 Startsev 1980, pp. 33–4.

70 Crawford/Crawford 1997, p. 262.

for a few days. Nicholas had Alekseev thank the grand duke for his consideration, but reject each demand categorically. The emperor did not consider it possible to postpone his departure and would decide on the dismissal of the cabinet members when he returned to the capital. As for the suppression of disorders in Petrograd, General N.I. Ivanov would be sent to the capital for that purpose, and would be assisted by reliable troops from the northern and western fronts. The grand duke, met with this rejection and the bellicose intention of the tsar to suppress the revolution, did not press further.

When Mikhail returned to the Mariinskii Palace to report the results of his conversation with Alekseev, Rodzianko and the Duma deputies were obviously disappointed. Another compromise solution slipped away due to the intransigence of the emperor. Rodzianko and Nekrasov returned to the Tauride Palace in depressed mood, dropping off Savich at his house on the way.

The grand duke-Alekseev conversation through the Hughes telegraphic apparatus also brought important news. It is from this conversation that the Duma leaders learned about the counterrevolutionary attempt by Nicholas and the high command led by General Ivanov to suppress the revolution in the capital. Having taken a few bold revolutionary steps, there was no turning around. The Duma Committee was determined to stop Ivanov's forces from reaching the capital.

The Duma Committee Publishes Its Own Newspaper

Since the general strike on 25 February, no newspapers had been published in Petrograd. Dissemination of accurate information, or more accurately, information designed to influence the actions and attitude of the citizens, especially masses of insurgents, was a pressing matter for the Duma Committee. On 26 February, a meeting of the Society of Petrograd Journalists was held, and elected its new presidium. On the morning of 27 February, the combined meeting of the Society of the Duma Reporters and the Society of Petrograd Journalists formed the Committee of Petrograd Journalists, and decided to issue a newspaper to inform the populace what was happening in the capital. The first issue of this newspaper, *Izvestia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, was published by the printing presses of publisher A.S. Suvorin, which published the newspaper *Novoe vremia*, and the printing presses of the newspapers *Rech'*, *Birzhevye vedomosti*, *Russkaia volia* and others.⁷¹ In the opening page, it

71 For a careful analysis of this newspaper, see Nikolaev 2005, pp. 96–9. The editions pub-

declared: 'Newspapers are not published. Events are moving extremely fast. People must know what is happening'. Nearly 500,000 copies from the printing press of Suvorin alone were published and distributed in the late evening of 27 February. Since it was the only newspaper published on 27 February, and due to its massive distribution throughout the city, the newspaper had enormous influence, informing the populace of major events, especially the formation of the Duma Committee and the Petrograd Soviet.⁷² The initiative to publish the newspaper belonged to the Committee of Petrograd journalists. Nikolaev argues that the journalists received the approval of the Duma Committee first, and then the approval of the Petrograd Soviet.⁷³ But judging from the contents of the articles published, the newspaper was much closer to the Duma Committee than to the Petrograd Soviet.

The Duma Committee Decides to Take Power

A few hours after the formation of the Duma Committee, two central figures, one representing the Duma Committee and the other a leader of the Petrograd Soviet, met accidentally in a corridor of the Tauride Palace. Sukhanov, pointing out that the Soviet was being formed a few rooms away and was ready to take power, warned that popular demands might be expanded to extreme limits. To keep them within set bounds, Sukhanov argued, it would be imperative that the Duma Committee take state power into its own hands. Miliukov replied, however: 'We, as a responsible opposition, without doubt, have striven for power and moved toward it, but not along the path of revolution. We have rejected this path; this path is not ours.'⁷⁴ Miliukov was still playing a waiting game.

By late at night, however, the victory of the insurrection in the capital became obvious. Crowds continued to gather in the Tauride Palace, where the socialist intelligentsia had taken the initiative of organising the insurgents by forming the Petrograd Soviet. The representatives of the Duma Committee,

lished by different printing presses were slightly different. In my 1981 book I used the later reprint of the newspaper, *Izvestiia revoliutsionnoi nedeli*, at the Hoover Institution. For the current work, I used the edition published by the printing press of Suvorin at the Newspaper Collection of the National Library in St. Petersburg.

72 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 155–8; See No. 1 of *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, 27 February 1917.

73 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 156–7.

74 Sukhanov 1922, pp. 118–19.

who came back to the Tauride Palace from Mariinskii Palace, saw with their own eyes that the streets of Petrograd were now virtually in the hands of the insurgents. Even to Miliukov the situation was clear enough to justify a modification of the Duma Committee's position. Shul'gin stated the motive behind the change of policy: 'If we do not take power, others will take it, those who have already elected some scoundrels in the factories'.⁷⁵ The only obstacle was Rodzianko's opposition.

Colonel B.A. Engel'gardt, an Octobrist deputy, spent most of 27 February in the Officers' New Club, near the Winter Palace. After learning of the formation of the Duma Committee, he finally sent for civilian clothes, took off his officer's uniform – it was dangerous to walk in the streets in an officer's uniform on that day – and walked quickly through the bitter, freezing night to the Tauride Palace. Entering the chairman's chamber, Engel'gardt saw twelve members of the Duma Committee assembled. Miliukov was whispering something to Shidlovskii in a corner; V. L'vov was pacing back and forth in the room. Rodzianko was sitting behind the large table. 'On his usually self-confident face, agitation and irresolution were visible'. Joining the twelve, Engel'gardt urged the committee to take power in order to avoid anarchy. Rodzianko objected and shouted: 'Gentlemen, what you are demanding from me is to take power in my hand. This is a direct revolutionary act. How can I agree with that?' Rodzianko still hesitated, but was obviously weakening. He asked for fifteen minutes to think it over and retired to his office.

At this moment, Shidlovskii, who had stepped out for an urgent telephone call, burst into the room. In an agitated voice he announced to Rodzianko:

Mikhail Vladimirovich, I have extraordinarily important news. My nephew, Captain Meshcherskii, informed me officially in the name of the commander of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment that the entire regiment subordinates itself to the disposition of the State Duma.

The deputies surrounded Shidlovskii and from all sides voices were heard, 'Now there is nothing to think about'. 'It's time to decide'. Rodzianko sat behind the table, staring at the ceiling and pretending not to listen to the voices around him. Miliukov came in front of him across the table. The eyes of Miliukov and Rodzianko met. Miliukov nodded three times significantly. Rodzianko straightened himself on the chair, struck the table loudly with his hands, and declared:

⁷⁵ Miliukov, 1955, p. 293; Shul'gin 1925, p. 179.

All right, gentlemen, I have decided. I consent to take power. But only on one condition. I demand – and this refers especially to you, Aleksandr Fedorovich [Kerenskii] – that all members of the committee ... unconditionally and blindly subordinate themselves to my command.

The members of the Duma Committee, embarrassed by Rodzianko's pompous speech, kept silent, but Kerenskii modestly reminded Rodzianko that he was still vice chairman of the Soviet.⁷⁶

When the Duma Committee decided to take power, it officially approved that its Military Commission be merged with the Petrograd Soviet's Military Commission, and appointed B.A. Engel'gardt as its chair. Engel'gart's name was recommended by Prince L'vov, but he belonged to Rodzianko's wing of the Octobrists, while serving as a colonel of the General Staff.⁷⁷ As we will see in the next chapter, this appointment caused some protest from the Military Commission created by the Petrograd Soviet, but the Soviet accepted the merger. Thus the officially united Military Commission was created around midnight of 27 February.⁷⁸

When did the Duma Committee indeed decide to take power? Burdzhhalov argues that the formation of the Petrograd Soviet was a crucial factor, and asserts that the Duma Committee decided to take power at 2 a.m. on 28 February, but backdated the time of this decision to 27 February.⁷⁹ In his interpretation, what triggered the Duma Committee's decision was the formation of the Petrograd Soviet. Nikolaev and Lyandres question this argument. What prompted the Duma Committee's decision, in their view, was not the information that the Preobrazhenskii regiment would join the insurrection, but the fact that the First Infantry Reserve Regiment with 200 officers and 12,000 soldiers had joined the revolution in full military formation. The Preobrazhanskii officers'

76 Engel'gardt, 'Potunuvshii mir', OR RNB, d. 218, ll. 105–6; Miliukov 1955, p. 298; Engel'gardt interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 59. Lyandres questions the validity of this version. According to Lyandres, the version that the 'entire Preobrazhenskii Regiment' pledged allegiance to the Duma Committee cannot be true, since one half of the regiment that was stationed near the Tauride Palace had already revolted, and one company had joined the loyal troops. In addition, Shidlovskii, an arch rival of Rodzianko in the Octobrist Party, could not have exerted a decisive influence on Rodianko. Lyandres 2013a.

77 Nikolaev 2005, 211–12.

78 Nikolaev 2005, 212–13. As for historiographical debate on whether the Petrograd Soviet's Military Commission was 'taken over' by the Duma Committee's Military Commission, see Nikolaev 2005, pp. 211–16.

79 Burdzhhalov 1967, p. 237. My 1981 book also subscribed to this view.

meeting took place at 11 p.m. on 27 February. By this time Engel'gardt had been appointed as the head of the Military Commission. The First Infantry Reserve Division had arrived in the Tauride Palace even earlier. From this Nikolaev and Lyandres deduce that the Duma Committee's decision to take power was made after 11 p.m. on 27 February, but before midnight of 28 February, perhaps around 11:30.⁸⁰ To Burdzhhalov the Duma Committee's decision amounted to the pre-emptive move to forestall the emergence of the Petrograd Soviet as a revolutionary power. Nikolaev and Lyandres dismiss the competition with the Petrograd Soviet as the motivation, and assert the inherently revolutionary nature of the Duma Committee. The Duma Committee had on its side the entire regiment of the First Infantry Regiment and one company of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment in full military composition. This was the crucial factor that Miliukov said he was waiting for in order to take the side of the revolution. It appears that Nikolaev and Lyandres are correct in emphasising the Duma Committee's decision to take power as a logical progression, without being influenced by the formation of the Petrograd Soviet.

The Duma Committee Issues a Series of Proclamations

The Duma Committee issued a series of proclamations at two o'clock in the morning of 28 February, but dated them 27 February, in the name of Rodzianko. The first proclamation appealed to the populace to protect state and public institutions, factories and mills, telegraph, water towers, electric stations and street cars, 'for the damage and destruction of institutions and property benefit no one and cause enormous harm to the state as well as to the people as a whole'.⁸¹ The second proclamation stated:

The Provisional Committee of the members of the State Duma under the difficult conditions of internal chaos created by the measures of the old regime has found itself compelled to take upon itself the task of the restoration of state and social order. Recognizing the vast responsibility that this decision carries, the committee expressed its conviction that the people and the army will assist it in the difficult task of creating a new

80 Nikolaev 2005, p. 314; Arkhipov 2000, 101, Nikolaev 2013, p. 25; Lyandres 2013a.

81 'Pervye shagi ispolnitel'nogo komiteta', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhuranlistov*, 28 February 1917, p. 1; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 119–20; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 249.

government, in accordance with the wishes of the people and capable of enjoying their confidence.⁸²

The Duma Committee also found it important to inform the military leaders of its decision, and dispatched the telegram to the Stavka, commanders of all fronts, and the commanders of the Baltic Fleet and the Black Sea Fleet. The telegram declared that 'in view of the removal of all the composition of the former Council of Ministers the governmental power has at the present time transferred to the Provisional Committee of the State Duma'. It further stated:

The Provisional Committee of the State Duma, taking in its hands the creation of normal conditions of life and administration in the capital, invites the acting army and fleet to maintain complete peace and nourish the conviction that the common task of fighting against the external enemy will not be even for a moment discontinued and weakened. The army and the fleet must continue the task of defending the Fatherland as firmly and courageously as before. With the joint actions with the capital's military units and with cooperation with the population, the Provisional Committee will soon bring about peace in the rear and restore the correct actions of the government establishments. Let ... each officer, soldier, and sailor fulfil his own duty and firmly remember that discipline and order is the best guarantee for the true and speedy end of the ruin that the old government had brought and the creation of the new government power.⁸³

With this appeal to the military leaders, the Duma Committee was attempting to convince them that it was not the extreme left-wing parties and the anarchical mobs that took power in the capital, but the responsible representatives of the Duma, who shared the common task of fighting with the external enemy. This appeal had a tremendous influence on the high command eager to suppress the revolution in the capital by military intervention.

The Duma Committee finally decided to take the last decisive 'jump', to complete the triple jump, to assume power. Rodzianko explained, 'The State

82 'Pervye shagi ispolnitel'nogo komiteta', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhuranlistov*, 28 February 1917, p. 1; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 119; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 249; *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie* 1957, p. 402; Browder /Kerensky 1961, p. 50.

83 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 119; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 248–9.

Duma did not have any alternative but to take power into its own hands and attempt to arrest the prevailing anarchy in this way'.⁸⁴ By its decision the Duma Committee plunged into the midst of an irreversible revolutionary movement, but the restoration of law and order would definitely require its halt. Moreover, what guarantees could this policy promise in avoiding military confrontation with the forces of the old regime? These difficult questions suddenly confronted the Duma Committee.

It is important to note that the Duma Committee at this time decided to take on 'executive power'.⁸⁵ Its intention was to take over the Council of Ministers that had ceased to function. Clearly, it was a revolutionary action, since it received no approval from the emperor, and in fact Nicholas had expressly ruled out the appointment of a Council of Ministers headed by either Rodzianko or Prince L'vov. This raises the question: on what grounds did this new 'executive power' claim its legitimacy? And what did the Duma Committee consider to be the relationship with the State Duma? Did the new 'executive power' consider itself to be responsible to the State Duma as a legislative power? If the new 'executive power' based its legitimacy on the revolution itself, could the State Duma, established and operative under the old regime, serve as its source of legitimacy? Or did the revolution itself change the nature of the State Duma? These were the questions that the leaders of the Duma Committee had to struggle with for the next few days.

Did the Duma Committee miss the chance to become a bona fide revolutionary power by delaying the decision to take power until 11:30 on the evening of the day of the insurrection? Had it made the decision earlier before noon, when the Council of Elders met, or at 2:30 when the private meeting began its deliberations, the prestige of the Duma, and the Duma Committee that was formed later, would have been enhanced, and it would have served as a more powerful magnet to attract the insurgent masses. This would have helped to undercut the radical socialists' propaganda among the workers and the soldiers, which steered the insurrection away from the Duma. In this sense, Kerenskii's lament that the Duma had missed its chance can be justified.⁸⁶

84 Rodzianko 1922, p. 41. Nikolaev emphasises the importance of the fact that the Duma Committee committed to the idea of taking power as the government of people's confidence, and argues that this proclamation proves that the Duma Committee was already acting as a revolutionary government. Nikolaev 2005, p. 391.

85 'Protokol sobytii,' *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 117; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 246.

86 Kerensky 1965, p. 196.

Immediately after the Duma Committee's decision to assume power, Sukhanov again met Miliukov. The ubiquitous leader of the Soviet Executive Committee described his impression:

At this moment Miliukov came into the room from Rodzianko's chambers ... He seemed triumphant, with a restrained smile on his lips.

'A decision has been made', he said, 'We are taking power'.

I sensed a new situation, a new favourable conjuncture for the revolution and new tasks for democracy that were now on the agenda of the moment. I felt that the ship of the revolution, thrown about in those hours by a squall and at the mercy of the elements, had spread its sails, had regained complete stability and regularity of movement in the midst of the terrible storm and toiling, and between the shoals and reefs had taken a definite course toward a distant point, invisible in the mist but known with certainty. Now the rigging is in order, the engines are working, the only thing needed is to steer the ships skilfully.⁸⁷

It would not take long for Sukhanov to realise how mistaken he was when he praised this moment as the happy beginning of the successful voyage of the Russian Revolution.

87 Sukhanov 1922, p. 142.

The First Steps of the Duma Committee

The Revolution Expands to Other Military Units and Outskirts

On 28 February the revolution in Petrograd accelerated. Insurgent soldiers attacked units that remained loyal to the government; they did not tolerate neutrality. Petrograd fell completely into their hands, and in the meanwhile insurrection spread to the outskirts of the capital. Anarchy and lawlessness were rampant and the Duma Committee was faced with a dilemma. It would be impossible to restore order unless it stemmed the tide of the revolution, but it would be equally impossible to establish a stable government acceptable to the insurgents if it stood in opposition to the revolution.

The troops stationed in Vasil'evskii Island – the Finland Regiment (18th Line), the 180th Infantry Regiment (Gavanskoe Field), and the Second Baltic Marine in the Deriabinskii barracks (92 Bol'shoi Prospekt) – maintained neutrality to the insurrection throughout 27 February. In the small hours of 28 February, the insurgent workers and soldiers attempted to cross Tuchkov Bridge and Birzhevyi Bridge from the Petrograd Side to go to Vasil'evskii Island. It should be noted that they were in close contact with the Military Commission, which dispatched a sanitary-reconnaissance detachment, mostly composed of students and nurses, to assist the insurgents. Around 4 a.m. the insurgents broke through Tuchkov Bridge, defended by the soldiers of the Finland Regiment and police with machine guns, who fired upon the insurgents, killing a university student and wounding a nurse. But 5 a.m. the cordon of defence of both Tuchkov Bridge and Birzhevyi Bridge were crushed, and the insurgents, seizing the machine guns of the defenders, poured into Vasil'evskii Island.¹ When workers appeared in the barracks of the Finland Regiment early in the morning and appealed to the soldiers to join the revolution, the soldiers attacked the regimental arsenal and went out to the streets. The insurgent soldiers and workers then moved to the barracks of the 180th Infantry Regiment with a musical band leading the way. The soldiers of this regiment also abandoned their position. The armoured cars dispatched by the Military Commission played an important role in inducing the soldiers of these regiments

1 Leiborov 1979, p. 257; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 231–2.

to take the side of the revolution. The insurgents next moved down to Deriabinskii barracks. There, sailors turned guns on the officers and joined the insurgents.²

The cruiser *Aurora* was anchored in the maintenance yard of the Franco-Russian Factory, where the crew had protested the imprisonment of three workers in the ship's stockade on 27 February. During the confrontation between the sailors and the officers one sailor was fatally shot and some others wounded. On the morning of 28 February workers gathered on the shore, appealing to the sailors to join the revolution. The sailors killed the commander of the ship, elected a new commander, organised the ship's committee, and sent their delegates to the Petrograd Soviet.³

On the outskirts of Petrograd, the soldiers of the First Machine Gun Regiment in Oranienbaum revolted on the evening of 27 February, when they learned of the insurrection in Petrograd. Seizing rifles, machine guns and cartridges from the armoury, they began marching on foot toward the city. On the way, they broke into the officers' training school at Petergof, some of them joining the insurgent soldiers. The swollen insurgents arrived early on the morning of 28 February at the Narva gate, pulling heavy artillery, disorganised and tired, but spirited. At first the Duma Committee was not sure if these soldiers were marching in support of the revolution or to suppress it. Rodzianko frantically attempted to contact the officers of this regiment, and sent the Duma deputies, P.V. Gerasimov, V.N. Pepeliaev, V.A. Stepanov, Efremov, and I.V. Titov (Progressist), to greet them at the Baltic Station. It is interesting to note that Efremov and Titov drove to the station in the car provided by Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich. The Duma deputies appealed to the soldiers to go to the Tauride Palace for further instructions.⁴

The soldiers of the Second Machine Gun Regiment in Strel'na, soldiers of the 176th Infantry Regiment in Krasnoe Selo, and four companies of the Don Cossack Regiment in Pulkovo also joined the insurgents in Petrograd.⁵ But just in case these troops from the outskirts might be turned to suppress the revolution, the Military Commission made sure to send the revolutionary troops with artillery to accompany the Duma deputies to greet them at the

2 Vasilii Starkov, 'Prisoedinenie Finlandtsev', *Pravda*, no. 23, April 1917, pp. 6–7; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 232–3.

3 Baltiiskie moriaki 1957, quoted in Burdzhhalov 1967, pp. 251–2.

4 Tarasov-Rodionov 1931, 56–79; Martynov 1927, p. 122; Cherniaev 1986, p. 265, 268–89; Burdzhhalov 1967, pp. 254–5; Nikolaev 2005, p. 236.

5 Matveev 1932, p. 13; Nikolaev 2005, p. 237.

railway stations.⁶ The revolution also spread to Tsarskoe Selo. This will be discussed in Chapter 24.

On this day, almost all military units in Petrograd and its vicinity, altogether 170,000 soldiers, joined the insurrection, and the insurgents marched to the Tauride Palace in military formation. The palace yard and the massive Ekaterina Hall suddenly became a large military camp. Among others, Nicholas's cousin, Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, led the crew of the Guard's ship to the Tauride Palace and declared his allegiance to the Duma. He was the first member of the royal family to break his oath to the tsar. He read aloud his telegram to all commanders of the military units in Tsarskoe Selo. 'I and the Guard's ship have joined to support the Provisional Government. I hope you and your units will do the same'. But as soon as he retired to Engel'hardt's room, he lost all the boldness and majesty of a grand duke and sat gloomily, his face pinched. He muttered, 'I was their chief, and I had to follow them'.⁷

Workers on the outskirts of Petrograd also responded to the insurrection in the city. In the Sestroretsk Weapons Factory in Sestroretsk, fifty miles north of Petrograd, workers abandoned their posts and held a meeting. They took over the factory, elected two Bolshevik delegates to the Petrograd Soviet, and created a militia and a food supply commission. The weapons they seized from the factory were handed over to the workers in Petrograd. Also on 28 February, workers of the Shlissel'burg Gunpowder Factory, joined by others from small mills, attacked Shlissel'burg Fortress, notorious as the prison for political prisoners, and freed all the prisoners.⁸

The only remaining troops that did not join the insurrection were of the Bicycle Battalion north of the Vyborg District. Early in the morning of 28 February workers and soldiers of the Eger Regiment, sent by the Military Commission, gathered on Sampsonievskii Prospekt in front of the barracks of the Bicycle Battalion. The insurgents appealed to the cyclists to join them, but the answer was a volley from a machine gun. Unable to break the resistance of the cyclists, the insurgents called the Military Commission for help, which sent two armoured cars. The angry insurgents then set the wooden barracks on fire. Stubbornly rejecting pleas from officers to surrender, the commander of the battalion, Colonel Balkashin, ordered his officers to gun down any deserting cyclists. But when the insurgents brought forward heavy artillery and fired upon the barracks, the demoralised cyclists ran out of the barracks with a white

6 'Protokol sobytiï', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 124; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 254.

7 Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvshii mir', *OR RNB*, d. 218, l. 112.

8 Tsybul'skii 1957, pp. 143–4; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 258.

flag to surrender. The crowds treated them as prisoners rather than welcoming them as comrades. Colonel Balkashin and other officers were executed on the spot.⁹

Fate of the Royal Troops

Only the forces that had locked themselves up in the Admiralty remained loyal to the tsar. A curious fact of the insurrection was that while the insurgents viciously attacked police headquarters, they were not in a hurry to attack the headquarters of the military establishments – the Admiralty, the General Staff, and the Ministry of War. This was partly because they believed that the area was protected by a large contingent of loyal forces, and partly because the insurgent soldiers were not psychologically prepared to take that risk. It was one thing to leave barracks and pledge allegiance to the Duma, but it was another matter to launch an attack on the very source of military authority. But more importantly, the Military Commission entered negotiations with the royal troops. Engel'gardt entertained the idea of attacking the Admiralty with artillery fire, but he was dissuaded from this act, and Rodzianko contacted the commanding officers of Khabarov's forces.¹⁰ In the morning an aide-de-camp of Navy Minister Grigorovich came to Khabalov with the minister's demand that the loyal troops be evacuated immediately from the Admiralty, lest the building should be damaged by crossfire in a military confrontation. Khabalov decided to avoid bloodshed and ordered the officers and the soldiers to return to their barracks.¹¹

Abandoning their weapons in one room, the loyal troops slipped out of the building one by one. Colonel P.V. Danil'chenko, appointed by Khabalov as the commandant of the Winter Palace, received a telephone call from Rodzianko, who invited him to come to Tauride Palace. But with the threat that the Admiralty would be bombarded from Petropavlovsk Fortress, the final contingent of the troops left the Admiralty by two to three p.m. on 28 February. Only then did the insurgents break into the Admiralty. Khabalov, Balk and a few of their assistants, who remained in the Admiralty, were arrested by the insurgents and sent to the Tauride Palace, but Beliaev and Zankevich escaped before their arrival.¹²

9 Martynov 1927, pp. 12–21; 'Dnevnik soldata na Vyborgskoi storone', *Pravda*, no. 6, 11 March 1917; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 234–5.

10 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 245–6.

11 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 250–1.

12 Martynov 1927, pp. 119–20; Deposition of Khabalov, *Padenie 1924*, vol. 1, p. 302.

Less than twenty-four hours later, Zankevich was to cooperate with the Duma Committee's Military Commission 'to protect the revolution from a counterrevolutionary attempt'.¹³

Occupation of the Petropavlovsk Fortress

The insurgents also surrounded the Petropavlovsk Fortress, which they regarded as the symbol of tsarist oppression, although at the time in this vast fortress only nineteen soldiers of the Pavlovskii Regiment were imprisoned. The capture of the Petropavlovsk Fortress was thus primarily of symbolic significance, comparable to the attack on the Bastille in the French Revolution. To avoid confrontation, Shul'gin of the Duma Committee and Skobelev of the Soviet Executive Committee were dispatched to negotiate with the commandant of the fortress, General V.N. Nikitin, who was eager to reach a settlement. Setting all the prisoners free and inviting representatives of the insurgents to tour the prison to make sure that all the prison cells were empty, the commandant recognised the authority of the Duma Committee. Nevertheless, the insurgents entered the compound of the fortress, suspecting there were still prisoners. Two Kadet Duma deputies, V.N. Pepeliaev and S.A. Taskin, were immediately dispatched with a detachment of 60 soldiers commanded by officers. The Duma deputies handed the Duma Committee's order in Rodzianko's name to Nikitin:

The garrison of the Petropavlovsk Fortress is in agreement with the State Duma and secures the Arsenal and the Mint. Hostile actions against the Fortress and entrance of outsiders are prohibited.

Nikitin accepted this order. Satisfied, the crowds dispersed. Nikolaev argues that the Duma Committee's role in transferring the control of the Petropavlovsk Fortress to the revolution was crucial, indicating the superiority of its authority over the Petrograd Soviet. Nevertheless, it is indicative that the newly installed commandant, E. Karpov, requested the endorsement of his authority from the left-wing Duma deputies, Chkheidze and Skobelev.¹⁴ Also in the small

¹³ Nikolaev 2005, pp. 252–3.

¹⁴ Document No. 8, Petrogradskii Soviet 1991, pp. 34–5; Shul'gin 1925, pp. 201–3; Skobelev 1927, p. 1; Nikolaev 2005, 244–7; Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 77; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 180; 'Protokol sobyiti', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 124; 'Protokol

hours of 28 February, the Military Commission succeeded in occupying the *gradonachal'stvo*.¹⁵

Battle of Astoria

The fiercest battle was fought in Hotel Astoria. During the war Astoria had been requisitioned by military authorities for officers on leave with their families, and for officers of the Allies. On 28 February a deputation consisting of the contingent of the Second Baltic Marines was sent from the insurgents, who demanded that the hotel administrators surrender officers living in the hotel. While negotiations were going on, a Russian general fired into the crowd from one of the windows, killing the commander of the deputation and wounding several. As if at a prearranged signal, a machine gun on the rooftop fired into the dense masses of people below. The infuriated insurgents returned machine-gun fire and many of those with arms stormed the building. The worst fighting took place in the vestibule – in a short time, torrents of blood came flowing out from the big doors of the hotel entrance. Overcoming the officers' resistance, the insurgents soon began a door-to-door search. They left foreign officers and their families unharmed, as well as the wives and children of the Russian officers. But the arrested Russian officers were dragged down into Isaakievskaiia Square in front of the hotel and a number of captured officers were shot on the spot, including the general who had fired the first shot. His body was unceremoniously thrown into the canal. Luckier officers were taken to a place of detention. The mob then looted the hotel and broke into its rich wine cellars. One soldier who could drink no more poured wine into his boots and wandered away.¹⁶

On 2 March, the Duma Committee's Military Commission announced: 'There is not a single military unit either in Petrograd or in its outskirts that maintains loyalty to the fallen power'.¹⁷

zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 253. In the interview, Skobelev said that he was dispatched as the Duma Committee's representative.

15 Nikolaev 2005, p. 248; Arkhipov 2000, pp. 107–8.

16 Jones 1917, pp. 163–6; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 258–9, 461–2; Gerasimov interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 92–3. Gerasimov was dispatched by the Military Commission to Hotel Astoria. Gerasimov stated in the interview that there were no machine guns found in the hotel.

17 'Pravitel'stvennye voiska', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, No. 6, 2 March 1917, p. 2.

The Duma Committee Takes Over the Soviet Military Commission

The Duma Committee faced the daunting task of restoring order out of the fast-deteriorating chaos in the city. The actions of the Military Commissions from the beginning bore the clear character of a revolutionary power, exercised in the first instance to prevent the old regime from suppressing the revolution and then to establish the Duma Committee as a legitimate revolutionary government.

The success of the Duma Committee's policy depended on whether it could control the insurgents, and for that the Duma Committee decided on two decisive measures: to take over the Military Commission organised by the Petrograd Soviet and to appeal directly to soldiers and officers to restore order.

Those who sought refuge in the Duma were not only soldiers who had mutinied, but also officers who had fled from their units for fear of attack by soldiers. Those officers assembled in Room 1B, the office of the journal *Narod i armia*. To them as well as to the members of the Duma Committee, the presence of the aimless insurgent soldiers in the Tauride Palace as well as in the streets was dangerous.¹⁸ No sooner had the Duma Committee decided to take power than it began the task of organising the insurgent soldiers. As mentioned in Chapter 18, Kerenskii's staff had acted to organise the insurgent soldiers, and this staff developed into the Duma Committee's Military Commission. Separately from the Duma Committee's Military Commission, the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet had also established its own Military Commission under Mstislavskii (see Chapter 17). The potential danger of 'dual power' manifested itself in these two Military Commissions. The Duma Committee swiftly extinguished this danger of dual power by choosing to absorb the Petrograd Soviet's Military Commission into its own Military Commission.

Around two o'clock on the morning of 28 February, Rodzianko and Colonel Engel'gardt, whom the Duma Committee had just appointed as the head of the Military Commission, appeared in Room 42, the headquarters of the Soviet Military Commission. Rodzianko announced to those present that the Duma Committee placed the functions of the Military Commission under its authority. Sokolov, whom the Soviet Executive Committee had elected as liaison between the Petrograd Soviet and the Duma Committee's Military Commission, strongly objected to the Duma Committee's arbitrary decision. 'What is important now', he stated, 'is not to restore order, but to destroy Khabalov and Protopopov'. The

18 RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 19, l. 78.

Military Commission needed the revolutionaries, not those officers appointed by the Duma Committee. Sokolov did not object to the inclusion of the members appointed by the Duma Committee in the Soviet Military Commission, but demanded that the majority of the staff unconditionally belong to the Soviet, and that the chairman of the Military Commission be elected. Rodzianko countered that if the chairman were to be elected, he would resign as the chair of the Duma Committee.

Rodzianko's high-handed declaration and Sokolov's vehement opposition appeared to signal an inevitable clash between the Duma Committee and the Petrograd Soviet. At this moment, Kerenskii rushed to the tense scene, talked with Rodzianko, and delivered an impassioned speech to convince the soldiers to accept Engel'gart's appointment. Moreover, the majority of the Soviet Military Commission, who knew very well the limitations of their own organisation, welcomed the participation of the Duma Committee. Mstislavskii persuaded Sokolov to accept the authority of the Duma Committee, guaranteeing watchful supervision by the revolutionary representatives over the activities of the new Military Commission.¹⁹

Neither the Executive Committee nor the general session of the Petrograd Soviet raised any question about this transfer of authority. Nor did Mstislavskii, appointed by the Petrograd Soviet to head the Military Commission, or Sokolov and Aleksandrovich, whom the Executive Committee had sent to serve as the watchdog over its activities, report their arbitrary decision to the Soviet. The Executive Committee acquiesced in the Duma Committee's gamble and decided to keep silent on its capitulation lest the insurgents should react to it violently. This reflected the reality of the overwhelming strength of the Duma Military Commission compared with the Soviet Military Commission. Clearly, the Duma Military Commission was in the driver's seat, and the initial members of the Soviet Military Commission willingly assisted the Duma Military Commission.²⁰

19 Mstislavskii 1922, pp. 29–31; Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvshii mir', *OR RNB*, d. 218, l. 106; Engel'gardt interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 59; Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 76.

20 According to Chikolini, who was a member of the Military Commission, Sokolov demanded that eighteen people representing the Petrograd Soviet be added to the Military Commission, but only one, a worker by the name of Grinevich (not to be confused with the Menshevik leader of the same name) remained. Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 76, 83. As for the historiographical debate on whether the Petrograd Soviet's Military Commission was 'taken over' by the Duma Committee's Military Commission, see Nikolaev 2005, pp. 211–16.

Not only did the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet acquiesce to the Duma Committee Military Commission's takeover of the Soviet Military Commission, but also it showed eagerness to subordinate its Military Commission to the Duma Committee's leadership. It issued two appeals in the early hours of 28 February to the insurgent soldiers. In the first proclamation, it appealed to the soldiers to elect their representatives and send them to the State Duma, where the Military Commission had been established, which would give them certificates [*spravki*] and instructions. The second leaflet that was distributed throughout the city on 28 February stated:

The Provisional Committee of the State Duma with the help of the Military Commission is organising the army and appointing chiefs [*nachalniki*] to all the military units. Not wishing to disturb the struggle against the old power, the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet does not recommend that the soldiers reject the existence of this organisation and subordination to its measures and appointments of chiefs.²¹

As far as the two Military Commissions were concerned, there was no dual power. The Soviet Military Commission had no power, and the Soviet Executive Committee was more than eager to create a single power under the Duma Committee.

The Military Commission Takes Revolutionary Action

The Duma Military Commission's takeover of the Soviet Military Commission, however, did not immediately involve a drastic change in the function of the newly merged Military Commission, since the Duma Military Commission was eager to take measures against the remnants of the old regime, whereas the leaders of the Soviet Military Commission were interested in restoring order in the streets. In other words, the goals of both the Duma Military Commission and the Soviet Military Commission more or less coincided.

An analysis of the now merged Military Commission's orders issued from 28 February to 3 March indicates that it concerned itself with four tasks: (1) occupation and protection of strategically important positions and buildings; (2) restoration of military order in army units; (3) disarming the military forces

21 Document No. 7, Petrogradskii Sovet, 1991, p. 25.

of the old regime, and (4) combatting lawlessness in the streets.²² The report prepared by the Duma Committee's Military Commission after the February Revolution on its activities during the revolution stressed restoration of order in the streets and harmony between soldiers and officers as its primary tasks. According to this report, the Military Commission, 'created at the initiative of the Provisional Committee of the State Duma', in conjunction with the Petrograd Soviet, functioned as the 'staff of the revolution'. Its main tasks consisted of 'restoration, construction, and support of the administrative mechanism', unification of the insurgents with the Provisional Government, security of persons and property, security of national treasures, railways, post and telegraphs, and the establishment of communications with the army at the front and with Allied governments.²³ As it turned out, the major conflict between the Petrograd Soviet and the Military Commission was to manifest itself in the relationship between the soldiers and the officers.

The first order of the new leadership was issued at eight o'clock on the morning of 28 February in the name of the commandant of the Tauride Palace, Iurevich. The order was to occupy Tsarskoe Selo Railway Station, the electric power station, the Savings Bank and the Technological Institute and to restore order in the surrounding districts. Ten minutes later, Engel'gardt, now the newly appointed head of the Military Commission, ordered a detachment of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment to occupy the State Bank and the telephone station and to establish guards at the Hermitage and the Museum of Alexander III.²⁴ The occupation of these strategic positions and places of cultural importance had a double meaning; while it bore a revolutionary character by taking control away from the functionaries of the old regime, it was also an attempt to assure the normal functioning of these places by preventing the insurgents

22 The Military Commission's orders issued on 28 February and 1 March, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1930, pp. 62–102; I used also GARF, f. 3348, d. 129 (Pal'chinskii Papers), and RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, dd. 3, 6, 9, 55. The last archival materials include the Military Commission's orders issued from 28 February through 4 March. See also the Military Commission's report sent to the Petrograd Soviet, GARF, f. 3348, op. 1, d. 170, ll. 6–7, quoted in Burdzhakov 1967, p. 275; Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, 76; see also brief account of the activities of the Military Commission, which list 28 items, Document 61, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 177–81.

23 RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 19, ll. 3–4.

24 Orders No. 1 and No. 2, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1930, pp. 78–9. The Military Commission issued similar orders to occupy various strategic positions. See Orders No. 4, 28, 29, 35, 48, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1930, pp. 79, 84, 85, 88. Also see RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 3, ll. 19, 39, 61; RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 9, l. 19; GARF, f. 3348, op. 1, d. 129, ll. 1, 2, 9, 10.

from effectively extending their influence. In this respect, the occupation and protection of military supply depots and the weapon and cartridge factories had a particular importance – the new leadership of the Military Commission was attempting to assert control of weapons, while keeping them from the insurgents. Lieutenant Stavin of the First Infantry Regiment, assigned to protect a weapon factory, requested that the Military Commission give him special authorisation since ‘the crowd reacted to him suspiciously’. Filippovskii immediately complied with that request.²⁵

Attack of Mariinskii Palace and the Police

Some measures taken by the Military Commission were revolutionary in character and aimed to destroy the remnants of the old regime. According to Engel'gardt, ‘he was no longer restoring order, but had become a revolutionary’.²⁶ Officers of the Second Baltic Marines were ordered to remove and replace the imperial guard at the Winter Palace, occupy the palace, and maintain order on the Nevskii, Moika, and in the Admiralty area. They were ordered to arrest former ministers and other agents of the former government. The Second Baltic Marine detachment, numbering around 400 soldiers and led by two officers, broke into the Mariinskii Palace shortly after midnight on 27 February. This order was issued by the Duma Military Commission before the merger of the two Military Commissions. At 1:55 a.m. on 28 February Beliaev sent a telegram to Palace Commandant Voeikov in Mogilev about the seizure of the palace by the insurgents. The insurgents were about to set fire to the palace, but the palace servants talked them out of it. Instead, around 4 a.m. they seized the documents of the Council of Ministers and burned them in the fireplace. After the seizure of the Mariinskii Palace, the Second Baltic Marines were ordered by the Military Commission to occupy the territory surrounded by Nevskii Prospekt, Neva, Moika and the Admiralty. This was one element of a concerted effort by the Military Commission to encircle the territory occupied by the loyal troops. It sent detachments of soldiers, each consisting of 50 to 150 soldiers commanded by young officers, to Palace Square and Senate Square, Morskaia Street. Around 8 a.m. on 28 February, the marines, together

25 Report 5 and Order No. 19, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1930, pp. 64, 82. Also see Reports No. 2, 21, 28, 79, *ibid.*, pp. 64, 67, 69, 76; GARF, f. 3348, d. 129, ll. 2, 6, 11. It is important to note that Filippovskii, originally a member of the Petrograd Soviet Military Commission was acting fully in cooperation with the Duma Military Commission.

26 Engel'gardt interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 60.

with other insurgent soldiers, led by an officer, marched from the Mariinskaia Square through Morskaia Street to Palace Square, but they were fired upon at the arc at Palace Square, and were dispersed without entering the Palace Square.²⁷

The Military Commission also took measures to seize police headquarters and police precincts. In the city there existed 47 police precincts, and by the morning of 28 February around 20 precincts had come under the control of the insurgents. The Military Commission issued an order to disarm the police, and following this order the insurgents carried out violent reprisals against the tsarist police, executing them on the spot, throwing them in the canals and rivers, and – when they were lucky – arresting them and sending them to the Tauride Palace. The Department of Police on Fontanka was attacked and burned, and all the police archives were destroyed. The Military Commission did not take measures to protect the building until 1 March. Also the Gendarme Headquarters on Furshtadskaia Street was burned. It was not until 1 March that the Duma Committee sent its representative as the commandant of the building.²⁸ It is important to note that the destruction of the police was instigated by the Military Commission, not necessarily by spontaneous actions on the part of the insurgents.

Takeover of the Vital Means of Communication

Another indication of how the Duma Committee acted as a bona fide revolutionary power was the speed with which it took measures to control the means of communication and transport. Engel'gardt issued the order to seize the Central Telephone Station at 8:10 a.m. on 28 February, and dispatched a military detachment including an armoured car and students. The Telephone Station was occupied by 11 a.m. After the occupation of the Central Telephone Station, the telephone communications were temporarily cut off. In order to restore vital telephone communications, the Military Commission used the Central Committee of Military Technical Assistance, a hastily created organisation made up of technical specialists and engineers. Filippovskii sent the Gnedovskii detachment of this committee, consisting of fifty-six armed technicians. Vital telephone lines connecting the Duma and other important organ-

27 GARF, f. 3348, op. 1, d. 129, l. 4; Reports No. 2, 6, 8, 17, 70, 71, 73, 80, in *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1930, pp. 63, 64, 65, 67, 75, 77; *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 16; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 239–40.

28 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 240–1.

isations were restored, but the private lines were permitted only with the permission of the State Duma, only for those necessary for the needs of the 'Executive Committee of the State Duma and the Soviet of Workers' Deputies'. While telephone communications with some military units remained cut off, the telephone service was restored quickly between the Tauride Palace and some new militia organisations.²⁹

The tentacles of the Military Commission extended to the Central Telegraph Office and the Post Office early on the afternoon of 28 February. Filippovskii issued an order to Captain Vasil'ev to occupy the Central Telegraph Office and restore order at 12:15 a.m. Vasil'ev commanded a detachment of fifty insurgents to implement this order. On 1 March Engarlgardt ordered all the coded telegrams to be detained until further notice. The Central Post Office was also captured by the soldiers of the Eger Regiment by the evening.³⁰

In addition to controlling the means of communications, the Military Commission moved quickly to control the transport system. The control of the railway stations and railway movement were of utmost importance in order to prevent General Ivanov's counterrevolutionary forces from reaching the revolutionary capital and to keep Nicholas II from joining his family in Tsarskoe Selo. By 3:20 a.m. on 28 February, Finland Station was under the control of the Military Commission, which dispatched a detachment of the Pavlovskii Regiment, accompanied by an armoured car, to occupy and control the station. The military detachment numbering 200 was ordered to secure the territory from the Finland Station to the Liteinyi Bridge.

Another important concern of the Military Commission was the reorganisation of military forces under the authority of the Duma Committee. Many military units that took the side of the Duma began to arrive in the Duma early on 28 February, including the Mikhailovskii artillery school, the Guard Grenadier Regiment, the 9th Reserve Cavalry Regiment, and companies of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment. Guchkov and Staff-Captain Rudnev went over to the barracks of the Preobrazhenskii and Volynskii Regiments, where the insurrections had been initiated, and released the officers arrested by the soldiers, transporting them to the Tauride Palace in the automobiles dispatched by the Military Commission.³¹ Order No. 54 of the Military Commission, for instance, instructed all troops of the Petrograd Garrison, and officers and soldiers of the Officers' Electrotechnical School and the Reserve Electrotechnical Battalion

29 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 241–3.

30 Nikolaev 2005, p. 244.

31 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 121; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 1996, pp. 250–1.

to return immediately to their companies and detachments for fulfilment of the task to be assigned by the Duma Committee. This order signed by Captain Chikolini later developed into Rodzianko's famous order, which provoked a violent reaction from the insurgents. Rodzianko and other Duma deputies also drove around to visit the barracks, appealing to the soldiers and officers for unity and the restoration of military discipline under the command of the officers. The Military Commission also dispatched reliable officers – mostly lower rank ensigns and lieutenants – to various military units to restore order and discipline. But some officers who were persuaded to return to the barracks were arrested by the soldiers upon returning.³² How to restore military discipline under the discredited authority of the officers was one of the most difficult tasks confronted by the Duma Committee, an issue that was eventually to lead to the fateful separation between the insurgent soldiers and the Duma Committee.

Suppression of Lawlessness

Reports on lawlessness – particularly the looting of wine cellars and illegal searches carried out in the houses of the well-to-do, which always ended in pillaging and looting – were also rampant. The Military Commission quickly divided the central parts of the city into districts, and assigned the restoration of order in each district to the military detachments led by the 'commandant' that it appointed.³³ Numerous orders signed by the Military Commission or by the Duma Committee to stop such looting and pillaging indicate the extent of the lawlessness that prevailed in the capital. The Military Commission issued an order on 28 February to arrest those found pillaging or looting and announced that persons apprehended would be brought to the military tribunal.³⁴ There were sporadic incidents where the insurgents pillaged the city's wine cellars, but compared with the explosive wine pogroms that happened after the October Revolution, it was rather amazing that the February Revolution was not accompanied by large scale wine pogroms. The Duma Committee and especially its Military Commission should be credited for keep-

32 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 121; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 251. Order No. 54, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1930, p. 89. See also Orders No. 3, 10, 11, 29, 32, 55, 62, and 106, in *ibid.*, pp. 79, 80, 81, 85, 89, 91.

33 Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 76.

34 Reports No. 9, 11, 13, 15, 43, 64; *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1930, pp. 65, 66, 71; RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 6, ll. 2, 9, 11, 12, 16, 18; RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 55, l. 2.

ing the danger of wine pogroms to a minimum. Since it was impossible to cope with the lawlessness in the streets, however, the Military Commission asked the city дума to create a city militia, as will be discussed below.

Arrests of the Tsarist Ministers

Another revolutionary step taken by the Duma Committee was the arrest of former tsarist ministers. As Nikolaev makes it clear, the order to arrest them was given immediately after Rodzianko and Nekrasov returned to the Tauride Palace from Mariinskii Palace on the evening of 27 February, even before the Duma Committee's final decision to take power, further indicating that the Duma leaders had made their conscious decision to accept the leadership of the revolution.³⁵ Spontaneously and without the sanction of any organisation, the insurgents started arresting the supporters of the old regime, ranging from former tsarist ministers and generals to petty police officers. While other Duma Committee members hesitated, Kerenskii personally sanctioned these arbitrary acts in the name of revolutionary justice. In fact, Kerenskii gave the insurgent soldiers a list of ministers and office holders of the old regime to be arrested.³⁶ The first to be arrested was the former minister of justice and the chairman of the State Council, Shcheglovitov. Legally, any member of the State Council or of the Duma enjoyed personal immunity and some members of the Duma Committee urged Rodzianko to have him released. Rodzianko went to the prisoner being held in custody by the agitated crowd, and amid the protests of the insurgents amicably invited him into his office as a guest. Kerenskii rushed to the scene and said to Rodzianko, 'No, Shcheglovitov is not a guest and I refuse to have him released'. Declaring that he was under arrest and that his safety would be guaranteed, Kerenskii on his own initiative – that is, without Rodzianko's permission – led the prisoner to the Ministerial Pavilion. Shul'gin ironically remarked:

Ecclesia abhoret sanguinem. Thus spoke the father-inquisitors, while burning their victims ... Likewise, while burning Russians on the altar of 'freedom', Kerenskii declared: 'The Duma does not shed blood'.³⁷

35 Nikolaev 2005, p. 507.

36 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 449–50; Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 229–30.

37 Kerensky 1965, pp. 197–8; Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 230–1; Shul'gin 1925, p. 171; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 450–1, 480–1. Rodzianko's permission to use the Ministerial Pavilion for the arrested tsarist ministers was given only on 28 February. Nikolaev 2005, p. 481. For

The Ministerial Pavilion was the room reserved for the ministers who came to the Duma for interpellation, but Kerenskii on his own initiative appropriated this room, with Rodzianko's subsequent permission, for the arrested tsarist high officials. During two days on 27 and 28 February, Sukhomlinov, Stürmer, Dobrovol'skii (minister of justice), Kriger-Voinovskii (minister of transport), Nikolai Maklakov, E.K. Klimovich (former director of the police department), Goremykin and others were brought to the Tauride Palace and ushered into the luxurious prison.³⁸ As the number arrested increased, the other members of the Duma Committee accepted and even appreciated Kerenskii's initiative, officially entrusting him with the management of the Ministerial Pavilion.³⁹

Nevertheless, humanitarian concern to save the tsarist ministers from the insurgents' violent reprisals was not the only motivation for their arrests. The conditions of the Ministerial Pavilion were far from a luxurious hotel. The former tsarist officials were not allowed to talk to each other. The light was not turned off at night, making it impossible for the prisoners to sleep. Only after the abdication of Nicholas II and Grand Duke Mikhail did the conditions improve, and the prisoners were allowed to talk to each other. Nikolaev makes the point that the locking up of the former ministers in the Ministerial Pavilion was done, not to save their lives, as often asserted, but rather to 'deprive the tsarist regime of the most faithful officials who could counter the revolution'. When Kerenskii arrested Shcheglovitov, he declared: 'In view of the fact that you are a dangerous person for the new government system, I must arrest you'.⁴⁰

Hiding in the servants' quarters of the state controller's office, Protopopov learned that insurgents were conducting a door-to-door search for former ministers. Panicked, the 'former' minister of internal affairs immediately abandoned his hideout, walked straight to the Tauride Palace, and announced at its doorstep, to students who happened to be there, that Protopopov had decided to turn himself in. The news created an immediate sensation among the crowds in the palace. Protopopov was immediately surrounded, and would have been

the arrests of Sukhomlinov, Nikolai Maklakov and Goremykin, see Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 230–1.

38 Dobrovol'skii was hiding in the Italian Embassy, and called Rodzianko from there, telling him to be ready to surrender. Rodzianko sent a convoy with an automobile, and brought him to the Tauride Palace. Nikolaev 2005, p. 463. See 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, 122, 126, 130; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev, 2012, p. 256.

39 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 480–8.

40 Nikolaev 2005, 487, 508; Document 111, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 247.

lynched brutally had it not been for Kerenskii, who rushed to the scene, ordered everyone in his high-pitched voice not to touch Protopopov, declared that he was under arrest, and ushered him safely to the Ministerial Pavilion.⁴¹

The arrest of former ministers, policemen and gendarmes had great political and psychological significance. As I.L. Arkhipov argues, the ritual of the insurgents bringing the arrested to the Tauride palace demonstrated the revolutionary nature of the Duma Committee, impressing upon the insurgents the victory of the insurrection as well as contributing to the prestige of the Duma Committee as the revolutionary power. It further indicated that the revolution was not a spontaneous chaos in which the insurgents resorted to uncontrollable violence, but had a centre that enforced discipline and organisation.⁴² Nevertheless, Arkhipov overstates the latter point, since not only could the Duma Committee not prevent revolutionary excesses, but also the Duma Committee's arresting orders in fact gave license to the vengeful violence exercised against policemen and officers. The insurgents hunted down policemen in their apartments, shot them, beat them on the spots or on the way to detention points. When their wives came to retrieve their dead bodies, the insurgents often refused, saying that 'dogs deserve a dog's death and let him lie there'.⁴³ In fact, Nikolaev argues that by sanctioning the arrests of the former tsarist ministers and tsarist police officers, the Duma Committee encouraged the revolutionary excesses against the holders of the tsarist regime.⁴⁴ Paul Grabbe, son of Count A.N. Grabbe, commander of His Personal Convoy of Nicholas II, witnessed the piles of killed policemen stacked like firewood in the side street off Liteinyi Prospekt.⁴⁵

To prevent arbitrary arrests, the Duma Committee declared that no arrests should be made without written permission from the Duma Committee. On 1 March, M. Karaulov, in the name of the Duma Committee, issued Order No. 1, giving guidelines defining the five categories of persons to be arrested and the detention centres to which the arrested should be brought. Only the highest officials of the tsarist government and generals should be brought to the

41 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, l. 181; 'Arest A.D. Protopopova', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistsov*, No. 3, 1 March 1917, p. 1. For Balk's arrest, see Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 77–8.

42 Arkhipov 2000, p. 119; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 457–8.

43 Various instances of violence against policemen and officers are described in detail in Nikolaev 2005, pp. 459–62.

44 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 509–10.

45 Grabbe 1977, p. 135.

Tauride Palace.⁴⁶ Despite these efforts, the crowd continued to make arbitrary arrests. To house the numbers in custody, the Duma Committee had to convert the Historical-Philological Institute at Petrograd University, the *gradon-achal'stvo*, and six other buildings into temporary prisons.⁴⁷ The Duma Committee created two commissions, a higher interrogating commission to investigate senior members of the old regime, and a lower interrogating commission to investigate ordinary policemen and criminals who had been placed under arrest. These interrogations yielded important information about the police measures that had been prepared by the security authorities to counter the expected unrest. For instance Protopopov revealed to Kerenskii the detailed plan of security measures adopted on 14 February, describing where machine guns had been set up and how the ministry of internal affairs had paid 40 rubles extra a day to each policeman.⁴⁸ Such information was undoubtedly used to suppress further resistance by the police.⁴⁹ With the exception of the former ministers and police officers, the majority of the arrested were released as soon as the insurgents had left the buildings. The arrest of the former tsarist ministers and officials and the investigations of the higher and the lower investigation committees demonstrate that the Duma Committee was taking over the judicial power – further convincing evidence showing the Duma Committee to be a revolutionary power.

The Duma Committee Takes over the Ministries

The Duma Committee further systematically attempted to take over the government functions from the old regime. According to Nikolaev, the Duma Committee appointed 38 to 43 commissars from the night of 27 February through 3 March. Nikolaev claims that the term 'commissar' was of the Duma leaders' invention and did not originate from the socialists in the Petrograd Soviet, as many historians have maintained. This appropriation of the revolutionary terminology from the French Revolution is also telling evidence of how the Duma

46 'Prikaz po gorodu Petrogradu', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov* No. 4, 1 March 1917; Nikolaev 2005, p. 464.

47 GARF, f. 3348, op. 1, d. 129, l. 15; 'Kuda dostabliat' politseiskikh', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, No. 4, 1 March 1917, p. 1; RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 3, l. 70.

48 Nikolaev 2005, p. 486, based on E.P. Kazanovich, *Tetrad' III: Dnevnik*, 15 noiabria–19 iunia 1917 g., OR RNB, f. 326, d. 19. l. 189ob.

49 For the higher and lower interrogating commissions, see Nikolaev 2005, pp. 473–80, 488–507.

leaders modelled themselves after their forefathers of the French Revolution. Nikolaev divides the way the Duma Committee took over the ministries and other bureaucratic institutions into four categories. The first category is the one in which the tsarist minister was retained and no Duma Committee's commissar was appointed. The Duma Committee's task was limited to providing protection for the ministry, assuring the free movement of the ministry bureaucrats. This was the case for the ministry of foreign affairs. Foreign Minister N.N. Pokrovskii was not arrested, since the Duma Committee considered him 'a man of honourable political conviction', but more for the necessity of maintaining normal foreign relations with foreign countries. The second category is the one in which former ministers and other high officials were allowed to stay on, but under the watchful eyes of the Duma Committee's commissars. This was the case for the ministry of the navy, the main administration of post and telegraph, and the ministry of imperial theatres. It was important to keep the Navy Ministry on the side of the revolution. Navy Minister I.K. Grigorovich continued to function as the Navy Minister, and in fact he was the first tsarist minister to support the Duma, playing an important role in persuading the Stavka to accept the revolution under the Duma. The Naval Staff's telegraphic communications with the Stavka were kept uninterrupted, providing crucial information about the situation in Petrograd to the Stavka. Little known but equally important is the role of V.N. L'vov (later appointed as the Provisional Government's Procurator of the Holy Synod), who ensured that the royal Imperial Ballet, the Conservatory and other cultural monuments be preserved and that they were not attacked by the insurgents.

In the third category, the ministers and high officials were removed and/or arrested, and the new commissars took over the ministries (state chancellery, ministries of war, justice, transport, finance, trade and industry, education, agriculture and the Petrograd *gradonachal'stvo*). The fourth category is the one in which no commissars were appointed, but the ministries were taken over by the Duma Committee, and the building was placed under its protection (government printing office and the ministry of health). In addition, the Duma Committee sent its commissars to Moscow, Finland, and the Baltic Fleet.⁵⁰

The takeover of the ministries by the Duma Committee assured the continuity of government functions without much interruption. The speed and

50 Nikolaev 2005, p. 321; RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 3, ll. 4, 9, 11, 13, 18, 22, 37, 38, 42, 48, 49, 51, 54, 55, 60, 62; 'Komissary Gos. Dumi', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, No. 3, 1 March 1917, p. 1; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 120; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 249–50; Nikolaev/Polivanov 1997, pp. 132–3.

effectiveness with which the Duma Committee took over the ministries suggest that the Duma, through its legislative work, was well prepared to assume government functions, a task that the Petrograd Soviet could not have possibly fulfilled. It was also a testimony of symbiotic relationship between the bureaucracy and the liberals during the war, which contributed to the bureaucracy's acceptance of the Duma's takeover.

Bublikov's 'Ems' Telegram and Takeover of the Ministry of Transport

Of these measures intended to take over the ministries, the most important was the takeover of the ministry of transport. On the night of 27 February, Bublikov urged the members of the Duma Committee to occupy the ministry of transport to control the railway network and telegraphic communications along the railway. Rodzianko first opposed this measure, but early on the morning of 28 February, he finally gave Bublikov the approval for the takeover of the ministry of transport, at the same time making state funds available for the operation.⁵¹

Supported by a detachment of fifty soldiers and two trucks furnished by the Military Commission, Bublikov marched into the ministry of transport and declared the occupation of the ministry by the Duma Committee. He placed all the officials under arrest, including the minister of transport, Kriger-Voinovskii, who refused to pledge allegiance to the Duma Committee, and sent them to the Ministerial Pavilion in the Tauride Palace. The first vice-minister, General Kisliakov, and the second vice-minister, Kozylev, although they were staunch monarchists, decided to cooperate with Bublikov.⁵² Bublikov's first act was to dispatch a telegram to all railway stations in Russia informing them of the revolution in Petrograd. The text, issued in the name of Rodzianko, read:

Railroad workers! The old regime, which created chaos in all aspects of state affairs, has proved powerless. The State Duma took the formation of a new government into its own hands. I appeal to you in the name of the fatherland that it now depends on you to save our native land, that it expects from you more than fulfilment of your duties, and that it expects sacrifices from you. The movement of trains must be carried on

51 Bublikov 1918, pp. 20–21; RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 3, l. 1.

52 Bublikov, 1918 pp. 21–2; *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1930, p. 88 Spiridovich 1962, pp. 240–1.

without interruption and with doubled energy. Technical weaknesses and insufficiencies must be offset by your selfless energy, love for your native land, and your awareness of the importance of transport for the war and the welfare of the rear.⁵³

This announcement was the first nationwide statement of the Duma Committee that told of the transfer of power. Bublikov's telegram certainly overstated the authority of the Duma Committee, for far from having taken power, it actually held control of no more than the following: the telegraph system, the Petrograd water station, the electrical station, tramways, railways, the State Bank and all governmental and administrative institutions. The attitude of the two crucial groups, the workers and the soldiers, on whose allegiance the strength of a new government would depend, remained as yet unknown. Nevertheless, the impact of Bublikov's telegram was far-reaching. Every single railway station in Russia, 'from the front of the war to Vladivostok, from Murmansk to the Persian border', received this news. All Russia now accepted the revolution as an accomplished fact. 'After this the abdication of Nicholas II and Mikhail', Bublikov's assistant, Professor Iu. Lomonosov, wrote, 'seemed only a secondary formality. From Bublikov's telegram all knew that by 28 February power was actually in the hands of the Duma'. He adds: 'Was this really the way it was? Of course not. Bublikov acted as Bismarck had done with the Ems telegram'.⁵⁴ The telegram was calculated to appease those, particularly the military leaders, who feared the destructive elements of the revolution. It assured them that power was now in responsible hands. Bublikov's telegram thus became one of the important factors behind the change of attitude of the military leaders.⁵⁵

The intention of the Duma Committee in sending Bublikov's telegram can be made clear by its subsequent circular telegram to the commanders of all fronts and to the Stavka. Rodzianko informed them that the resignation of the cab-

53 Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a, pp. 32–3; 'Protokol sobytii', Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, p. 120; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 250, 'Obrashchenie k zheleznodorozhnikam', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnal'istov*, No. 2, 28 February 1917, p. 1. The original draft of this appeal prepared by Bublikov had begun with the phrase: 'The old regime has fallen'. But met with Rodzianko's strong objections, Bublikov had to soften the tone. For the Duma Committee's attempts to maintain the normal function of the railway movement see also RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 3, ll. 7–8.

54 Lomonosov 1921, p. 27. Only the director of the Southern Line did not immediately inform the railway workers of this telegram.

55 See Chapter 24; Nikolaev 2005, p. 390.

inet ministers compelled the Duma Committee to assume power and assured them that no change in external or internal policy would be effected. The telegram continued, 'The Duma Committee in cooperation with the military units and the population in the capital will in the immediate future restore peace in the rear and resume the normal activity of governmental institutions'.⁵⁶ A difference in emphasis between Bublikov's public announcement and Rodzianko's classified telegram to the military leaders illustrated the predicament of the Duma Committee in trying to steer through the narrow passage between the two conflicting forces.

Rodzianko's Order and the Genesis of the Soldiers' Question

While emphasising the restoration of order in the capital to the High Command, the Duma Committee faced a daunting task of restoring discipline among the insurgent soldiers. For this purpose, some members of the Duma Committee personally appealed to soldiers to maintain discipline. Rodzianko, addressing cadets of Mikhailovskii Artillery Military Academy who had arrived at the Tauride Palace, asked them to obey their officers and wait for instructions from the Duma Committee, for 'only the unity of the army, the people, and the State Duma will guarantee our strength and power'. To the soldiers of Preobrazhenskii Regiment, who came to the Tauride Palace without their officers, he declared:

You know better than I do that without officers, soldiers could not exist. I implore you to subordinate yourselves to the officers and believe them, as we believe them. Return peacefully to your barracks to be ready at the first request to come here when you will be needed.

Miliukov also delivered speeches to soldiers gathering in the Tauride Palace, emphasising that the Duma Committee was the only power. He declared: 'There can be no dual power'.⁵⁷ This term, dual power, which later acquired wide currency during the Russian Revolution, was used for the first time.

56 'Protokoly sobytii', Fevel'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, p. 119; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev, pp. 248–9.

57 'Rech' M.V. Rodzianko k iunkeram Mikhailovskogo artilleiskogo uchilishcha', 'Rech' Rodzianko k leib-grenadelam', 'Rech' Rodzianko k preobrazhentsam', 'Rech' Rodzianko g zapasnomu kavaleriiskomu polku', 'P.N. Miliukov v pervom zapasnomu polku', 'Rech' Miliukova leib-gvarderam', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, No. 2, 28 February 1917, p. 1.

Thus, from 28 February to 1 March, the Duma Committee, mainly due to the determined actions of its Military Commission, was establishing itself as an unquestionable revolutionary power. As Wildman points out, 'this appeared to be a sharp turning point in the fluid political situation in favour of the Duma and the restoration of normal military command'.⁵⁸ The crucial question was the relationship between the officers and the soldiers and what relationships the new revolutionary regime should establish between them. It was here that the insurgent soldiers' reactions to the Duma Committee and the Military Commission were to snatch the victory of the Duma Committee from the jaws of victory.

The Duma Committee issued a series of proclamations and orders and appealed to the soldiers and officers to restore order and discipline in military units. In the appeal addressed to officers, it urged them not to leave the masses of soldiers without commanders and to receive necessary information and instructions from the Duma Committee. The Military Commission ordered the soldiers to return to their own barracks and designate temporary commanders and junior officers, who were instructed not to leave the soldiers in the barracks without attention and leadership, while isolating and not letting into the barracks those officers who did not join the insurrection.⁵⁹ In addition, the Duma Committee and the Military Commission jointly issued an order to all officers in Petrograd to attend a meeting of the army and fleet to be held on 1 and 2 March:

for the purpose of receiving a certificate of all-purpose pass and new registration, for receiving instructions from the [Military] Commission to organise the soldiers who had joined the representatives of the people, and for the defence of the capital.

'It is essential at the present moment to devote all our strength to organisation of the military units', the order continued, 'The strength of the army and the guarantee of the final victory will depend on this'. Another proclamation reiterated the Duma Committee's efforts to restore a normal relationship between the officers and the soldiers, and appealed to the officers to cooperate with the Duma Committee in this difficult task.⁶⁰ The officers who had kept noncom-

58 Wildman 1980, p. 177.

59 Document 47, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 150.

60 'Prikaz: gg. ofitsery Petrogradskogo garnizona i vse gg. ofitsery nakhodiashchikh v Petrograde', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, no. 3, 1 March 1917, p. 1; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 123.

mittal neutrality since the outbreak of the insurrection by hiding in officers' quarters, or in apartments of their acquaintances, welcomed these appeals of the Duma Committee and the Military Commission.

Nevertheless, it was precisely these proclamations, received with enthusiasm by the officers, that further alienated the insurgent soldiers. With the insurrection, the relationship between the officers and the soldiers was irreparably broken; many soldiers never returned to their barracks after once abandoning their posts. As officers returned and began taking command, however, the soldiers' fear of retaliation mounted. Since their rebellion was directed against military discipline and the hierarchy as much as against the old regime, returning to their barracks and obeying the orders of their officers again seemed to reduce their entire action to nothing. A leaflet distributed among insurgent soldiers appealed to them:

Retreat is impossible! Either freedom or death! Don't disperse to the barracks! Don't leave the city! Achieve the participation of all who have not yet joined the struggle in the revolution!⁶¹

Orders and proclamations issued by the Military Commission and the Duma Committee calling for restoration of orders and discipline in military units aggravated their hostility and their suspicions of these bodies.

Engel'gardt and Bublikov were concerned with the soldiers roaming around the streets. They believed that the Duma Committee should recall them to their barracks and place them under their commanding officers. They jointly composed an order to all officers and soldiers and issued it in the name of Rodzianko: (1) all the individual soldiers and all military units should return to their barracks immediately; (2) all officers should return to their units and take necessary measures to restore order; and (3) commanders of units should appear at the Tauride Palace at eleven o'clock in the morning of 1 March to receive further instructions.⁶² The insurgent soldiers perceived Rodzianko's order to be intended to restore order and discipline in the military units under the authority of the old commanding officers. Moreover they suspected that the order concealed the Duma Committee's intention to have them surrender weapons to the officers. As we shall see later, this order provoked a violent

61 Quoted in Burdzhakov 1967, p. 243.

62 Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvshii mir', RO RNB, f. 218, No. 306, ll. 106–7; Engel'gardt interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 62; Rafes 1922, p. 193; Sukhanov 1922, vol. 1, p. 207.

reaction not only among the soldiers but also among the workers, and drove the insurgents decisively to the side of the Petrograd Soviet.⁶³

Guchkov Takes Over the Military Commission

While heading the Military Commission, Engel'gardt clearly saw that its operation under the constant influence of the Petrograd Soviet would eventually conflict with the authority of the war ministry to be organised by the future provisional government. Therefore, he suggested the amalgamation of the Military Commission with the war ministry. For the first step in this direction, he offered his resignation and suggested that the Military Commission be headed by Guchkov, already the unanimous candidate for the post of war minister in the Provisional Government.⁶⁴ Thus, late at night on 28 February, Guchkov took over. Nonetheless, Engel'gardt stayed on and shared the duty as the head of the Military Commission with Guchkov.⁶⁵

The appointment of Guchkov, who had a large number of acquaintances among the military establishment and enjoyed undisputed authority over military matters, enhanced the authority of the Military Commission in its relations with the officers. He managed to incorporate the military establishment of the imperial army in Petrograd under his authority. Zankevich, for instance, who had been a commander of loyal forces only a day before and who had narrowly escaped arrest in the Admiralty, was now asked by Guchkov to stay on as head of the General Staff for the Military Commission. Able officers at the level of colonel – L.S. Tugan-Baranovskii, G.A. Iakubovich, P.A. Polovtsov, G.N. Tumanov and others – provided leadership for the work of the Military Commission.⁶⁶ As a result, officers with connections with the socialist parties were pushed into the background. On 1 March, the officers in the commission met at 4 a.m. and approved the clearly delineated departments within the commission, based on the floor chart that P.I. Pal'chinskii had crafted before the meeting.⁶⁷ It is astonishing to see the speed with which the Military Commis-

63 See Chapter 20.

64 Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvshii mir', RO RNB, f. 218, No. 306, l. 114.

65 Engel'gardt interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 60–1.

66 The eight colonels of the General Staff who joined the Military Commission were: Engel'gardt, F.I. Balabin, V.I. Baranovskii, L.S. Tugan-Baranovskii, V.P. Gil'bakh, P.A. Polovtsov, G.N. Tumanov, and G.A. Iakubovich. Lyandres 2013, p. 84; Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2103, p. 78, 84; Tugan-Baranovskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 121.

67 These departments included: assignments, inquiries, armaments, quartermaster, railways,

sion organised themselves into these elaborate departments with specific tasks less than forty-eight hours after its creation.

It is important to note that the Soviet representatives in the Military Commission fully cooperated with the new leadership. It was Filippovskii who ordered Lieutenant Stavin to protect weapon factories from the insurgents. Also Filippovskii made an automobile available for the future prime minister of the Provisional Government, Prince G.E. L'vov. The Soviet Executive Committee appealed to the soldiers not to disobey the orders of the Military Commission and to cooperate with it for the struggle against the old regime.⁶⁸

Guchkov's view on military discipline and his undisguised hostility to the insurgents' demands, however, earned the hatred of the masses of soldiers. Guchkov drove around the city from one regimental barracks to another in an effort to organise a new military force strong enough to counter both the crowds in the streets and counterrevolutionary forces. This policy, however, had its price. While driving in the city, Guchkov was shot at by a sniper; the shot narrowly missed Guchkov, but instantly killed his trusted aide, Prince D.M. Viazemskii.⁶⁹

Creation of a Police Force

As the insurgents emptied the prisons, releasing the criminals, the police was annihilated, and insurgent soldiers roamed the streets. Petrograd was suddenly faced with the danger of lawlessness. Altogether 20,000 criminals were freed from prisons, and no less than 70,000 weapons were handed to the insurgents.⁷⁰ Illegal searches were conducted in offices of various organisations and private apartments, and crowds attacked wine cellars and vodka factories.⁷¹ In order to assure the victory of the revolution, containing the widespread anarchical explosion of crime was essential and the creation of some kind of police

counter-intelligence, information, assessment of the morale of soldiers, radio-telegraph, automobiles and others. Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 73–4. For more details, see Nikolaev 2005, pp. 593–658.

68 GARF, f. 6, op. 1, d. 1722, l. 26; Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvshii mir', RO RNB, f. 218, No. 306, l. 110; Orders No. 19, 72, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1930, pp. 82, 93; Document No. 7, *Petrogradskii Sovet* 1991, p. 25.

69 Burdzhakov 1967, pp. 277–8.

70 Nikolaev 2005, p. 511.

71 For the wide spread of crime, the attack on wine cellars, drunkenness, and aimless shooting, see Nikolaev 2005, pp. 541–5.

force was an urgent necessity. Not only the Duma Committee but also the Petrograd Soviet recognised this urgent task. The Military Commission alone could not do it. Yet any delay in the organisation of a police force could not be tolerated, since the Duma Committee's rival, the Petrograd Soviet, had already taken the initiative of forming a workers' militia. If the Petrograd Soviet succeeded in establishing effective control over police power, it would gravely undercut the authority of the Duma Committee.

On 28 February, the Duma Committee dismissed Major-General Balk as the Petrograd *gradonachal'nik* and appointed Professor V. Iurevich of the Military Medical Academy as his successor. To signify the break with the past, the new office was renamed society's (*obshchestvennyi*) *gradonachal'nik*, the task of which, Iurevich declared, was to 'insure the personal safety of citizens and of their property', and to establish committees for the 'security of order and food for citizens'.⁷² It turned out to be impossible, however, to establish a militia on the basis of the administrative structure of the *gradonachal'stvo*, which had become completely disrupted by the destruction of the police, an action that the Duma Committee had consciously pursued. According to Nikolaev, Iurevich held a joint conference with representatives from the city duma and the Petrograd Soviet for the creation of a militia on the morning of 28 February. Presumably at this meeting the task of creating a new militia was entrusted to the city duma.⁷³

The city duma held an emergency meeting in the evening of 28 February, and decided to create a city militia [*gorodskaiia militsiia*] 'in the interests of the assurance of life and property of the population'.⁷⁴ It appointed its emissaries in each district of Petrograd for the organisation of the militia and elected Dimitrii A. Kryzhanovskii (an architect by profession) as Chief [*nachal'nik*] of the City Militia. The mayor of the city [*gorodskoi golova*], Iu.N. Glebov, elected by the city duma on 28 February to replace his predecessor, N.N. Lelianov, offered the mayor's office, which was in the city duma building at 33/1 Nevskii Prospekt, as the central headquarters of the city militia, and appropriated 10,000 rubles from the city budget for its operation. Zigfrid Kel'son, who became the chief administrative officer for the city militia on the recommendation of a Menshevik member of the Soviet Executive Committee, B.D. Bogdanov, organised the administrative work of the city militia, mobilising in an ad hoc manner the

72 'Gorodskaiia militsiia', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistsov*, No. 4, 1 March 1917, p. 1; RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 3, l. 24. For detailed analysis of the formation of the militia organisations during the February Revolution, see Hasegawa 1973, pp. 303–22.

73 Nikolaev 2005, p. 528.

74 Burdzhahalov 1967, p. 272; Hasegawa 1973, p. 306; Kruchkovskaia 1986, p. 23.

female employees of the city duma, wives of the city duma deputies, boy scouts and high school students.⁷⁵ It was decided that the new militiamen would be provided with new uniforms, and that the militiamen should wear a white band with the red initials, 'G.M.' – city militia [*gorodskaiia militsiia*] – on the left arm.⁷⁶ On 1 March the Duma Committee decided to provide all the militiamen with weapons, and made automobiles available for the city militia. The Duma Committee made sure that Karaulov's Order No. 1, defining the limits of arrests and searches, were extended to the militia.⁷⁷

At the same time, the city duma appointed its plenipotentiaries for nine districts to initiate the creation of a city militia and designated specific location for district headquarters.⁷⁸ Most of the district representatives were selected from the city duma members, but for the Vyborg District two students of the Military Medical Academy, V.G. Botsvadze and a certain Shvakhtsaboi, together with two city duma members, received authorisation – a recognition that the city duma members alone could not carry much influence in the workers' section.⁷⁹ Responding to the appeal of the city duma, many educational and technical institutions supported the creation of a city militia. Establishing its headquarters in the newly elected mayor's office, the city militia created the initial contingent of a police force composed mainly of civil servants and university and high school students.

Students of higher educational institutions actively participated in the formation of the militia, volunteering to be militiamen. But the influence of Socialist Revolutionaries and other revolutionary parties were strong among student organisations. On 1 March, an appeal to the revolutionary students was printed in the name of the SRS, Social Democrats, and the Bund, calling for the students to join the 'citizens' [*grazhdanskaia*] militia organised by the city duma, but reminded them: 'Remember that you are joining the militia for the commission [*po porucheniiu*] of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Remember that the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies is your highest organ of power [*verkhovnoe nachal'stvo*]'.⁸⁰ Thus, out of necessity, the Duma Committee

75 Z. Kel'son 1925, pp. 162–3. For more detail of the formation of militia organisations during the February Revolution, see Hasegawa 1973, pp. 306–7; Wade 1984, pp. 36–57.

76 Nikolaev 2005, p. 529.

77 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 531–2, 536.

78 The appointed representatives and the place of meeting for these nine districts are identified by Nikolaev 2005, p. 529.

79 Hasegawa 1973, pp. 305–6; Kel'son 1925, p. 162.

80 'K revoliutsionnomu studentstvu', *Izvestiia Soveta rabochikh deputatov*, No. 2, 1 March, 1917, p. 3.

was forced to cooperate with the Petrograd Soviet, and some plenipotentiaries appointed at the district had dual appointments by the Duma Committee and by the Petrograd Soviet.⁸¹ Especially important was the active role played by the students at the Technological Institute in the Moscow District and the students of the Mining Institute in Vasil'evskii Island.⁸²

By 1 March, thus, two centres of the militia came into existence in Petrograd, one organised by the Petrograd Soviet and the other by the city duma in close cooperation with the Duma Committee. Both authorities, however, envisaged the militia as a police power designed to restore order in the streets. For the moment, all organisations were united for one purpose: to restore order to ensure the victory of the revolution. It was only after the intervention of the insurgent workers in the creation of the militia organisations that conflicting goals split the militia in Petrograd into two separate organisations – the city militia and the workers' militia. The tripartite relationship among the Duma Committee, the city duma, and the Petrograd Soviet on the new militia vividly illustrated in microcosm the complexities of the power play during the February Revolution.⁸³

Soviet-Duma Committee Food Supply Commission

In addition to the organisation of the city militia, the city duma closely cooperated with the Duma Committee on the matter of supplying food. In the late afternoon of 27 February, the Duma Committee had sent its delegates, Shingarev and S.V. Vostrotin (Kadet), to the Food Supply Commission created by the Petrograd Soviet. Compared with the Duma Committee's similar approach to the Military Commission, the takeover of the Food Supply Commission went smoothly because of the extreme willingness of the Soviet members to cooperate with the Duma delegates. On 28 February 'the Food Supply Commission of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Executive Committee of the State Duma' announced that it had assumed the central leadership of all food supply matters. It decided to introduce a ration system for bread and to reorganise the distribution network. On 1 March, the entire matter of food in Petrograd was now transferred to the city duma Food Supply Commission.⁸⁴

81 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 533–4.

82 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 534–55. For the militia in the Lesnoi District, see *ibid.* p. 537.

83 Hasegawa 1973, pp. 303–22.

84 'Prodovol'stvie gor. Petrograda', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh deputatov*, No. 2,

As in the case of the Military Commission, the Duma Committee's preponderance in the joint Food Supply Commission was obvious. Although the Petrograd Soviet took the first initiative to create the commission, it did not have the resources and know-how to organise the food supply in the city. It was the Duma Committee that provided the necessary in-city transport of food supplies by using the automobiles and horse-drawn carriages at its disposal. It provided the protection (by the Military Commission) for major food supply storages and depots, negotiated with the Military Procurement Administration to release its food supply, and organised feeding stations throughout the city. On 1 March, the Soviet-Duma Committee Food Supply Commission appointed the city duma deputy I.V. Nikanorov as the plenipotentiary of the food supply for the city. All the transport of food to the city and the distribution had to be under Nikanorov's authority.⁸⁵ Altogether 169 to 179 feeding stations were established, and in this effort, the Duma Committee, especially Kadet A.V. Tyrkova-Williams, and the students played a crucial role, although in the working-class neighbourhoods the workers also created their own feeding stations.

On the first day of its existence the Duma Committee took some important steps in the name of revolution to put a brake on the revolutionary process. Engel'hardt commented,

We accepted the revolution as an accomplished fact and for three days we looked as though we were leading it. But actually we dragged ourselves along behind events, while making at the same time hopeless attempts to arrest its development.⁸⁶

But the Duma Committee failed to capture the support of most of the insurgents, since its ultimate goal of establishing the restoration of order did not correspond to their wishes and aspirations. To mobilise the support of the masses, therefore, the Duma Committee had to rely on other methods.

1 March 1917, p. 4; 'Prodovol'stvennyi vopros', *ibid.*, No. 3, 2 March 1917, p. 2; Volobuev 1962, p. 390; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 118; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 247–8.

85 Nikolaev 2005, p. 439; Arkhipov 2000, p. 97.

86 Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvshii mir', *RO RNB*, f. 218, No. 306, l. 108.

The Petrograd Soviet and the Masses

Elections to the Petrograd Soviet

The insurgents responded with enthusiasm to the Petrograd Soviet's call for election of deputies to the Soviet. Their overwhelming support quickly changed the nature of the Soviet from what the leaders had originally envisaged. It was becoming a central organ of the insurrection, through which the masses of insurgents freely expressed their opinions, and by virtue of this support the Soviet unexpectedly acquired authority in Petrograd that no other political group, even the Duma Committee, matched. When the masses carried their leaders on this buoyant upsurge, the original initiators of the Soviet began to feel frightened by their own creation. The insurgent masses who had come to rally behind the Soviet might push them to the forefront of power, which they were neither prepared for nor capable of assuming. The Soviet leaders thus began looking for an escape from this predicament. Their willingness to cooperate with the Duma Committee, even abandoning authority already established, was their first step in solving this difficulty.

On 28 February *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh deputatov* printed the first proclamation of the Petrograd Soviet to the populace of Petrograd and all Russia. After noting that the old regime 'led the country to complete chaos and people to hunger', the proclamation urged a final struggle against autocracy, which 'must be overthrown once and for all'. It announced the creation of the Petrograd Soviet, which had taken upon itself the struggle for political freedom and the formation of a people's government, emphasising the importance of establishing a government based on the people. The proclamation called for the convocation of a 'Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of universal, secret, equal, and direct suffrage'.¹ The importance of this document consisted in what it did not mention rather than what it did. It skirted around all the important questions that would inevitably confront post-revolutionary Russia. The problems of land and peace, on which the views of the Soviet leaders irreconcilably differed, were totally ignored. More importantly, the proclamation was silent on the problem of power. Stressing the importance of establishing a

1 'K naseleniiu Petrograda i Rossii', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh deputatov*, No. 1, 28 February 1917, p. 1; Document 23, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 81–2.

government based on the will of the people, it did not specifically mention how such a government should be formed. Although it urged the convocation of a constituent assembly, it failed to explain who should take power in the meantime. It did announce the creation of the Soviet, but it remained silent as to what part this organ should play in relation to the government to be formed. The document reflected the ambiguous position the Executive Committee took on the matter of power. Yet the intensification of the revolutionary movement from below on 28 February and 1 March compelled the Executive Committee to take a definite position on this problem.

The election of Soviet delegates in major factories and military units began on 28 February. Although complete lists of the factories and military units that conducted the elections and the breakdown of the party affiliations of the elected delegates do not exist, it is clear that the Mensheviks and the SRS composed a majority.² With the exception of Rozenkrantz and New Lessner, the Bolsheviks did not do well even in the factories where they had built their strength during the war. For instance, they managed to gain fewer than ten out of forty delegates in the election of the Putilov Factory held on 1 March. The radical socialists combined (Bolsheviks, left SRS, and Mezhraintsy) won less than 10 percent of the total of nearly six hundred deputies.³

This indicated that although Bolsheviks, Mezhraintsy, and left SRS had a strong base in the underground revolutionary movement, they did not command great influence in the broader section of workers and soldiers who had suddenly plunged into political life. Particularly, the inclusion of non-factory workers such as city and hospital employees, druggists, cab drivers, teachers, and so on, in the composition of the Soviet as well as the predominance of soldiers over workers with a ratio of 2.3 to 1 contributed to the relative weakness of the extreme left in the Soviet.⁴ The people who supported the Soviet had divergent expectations as to what function the Soviet should fulfil. The workers in Stetin Factory called the Petrograd Soviet a provisional revolutionary government, but the workers of the Petrograd Cartridge Factory referred to it

2 For a list of factories that held elections on 28 February and 1 March, see Zlokazov 1969, pp. 38–40; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 223; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, pp. 509–11; Wada 1968, pp. 441–2.

3 Artem'ev 1964, p. 126; Zlokazov 1964, pp. 106–8; Wada 1968, pp. 441–2. Oznobishin lists only thirty-eight Bolsheviks in the first days of the Soviet. Oznobishin 1963, p. 113. Leiberov adds another ten to Oznobishin's list. Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, pp. 509–11.

4 For the various arguments by Soviet historians as to why the Bolsheviks did not gain a majority in the Soviet, see Artem'ev 1964, pp. 116–28; Zlokazov 1966, pp. 109–11; Zlokazov, 1969, pp. 35–6; Burdzhakov 1967, pp. 223–5.

as the temporary workers' committee in the State Duma. The workers of the Northern Weaving instructed their delegate to convey these instructions to the Soviet:

If we cannot come to an agreement with the German People, the war should be carried out to the end. The form of the political system should be a democratic republic. The actions agreed upon between the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the committee elected from the State Duma are desirable.⁵

The instructions that accompanied the elections of the Soviet deputies at the Pipe Factory referred to 'the danger of the actions of those who insist on the Provisional Government'. Clearly this criticism was levelled against the Bolsheviks, the Mezhrailontsy, and the left SRS, who advocated the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government. The instructions criticised Kerenskii for calling for the subordination of soldiers to the officers. 'Since the soldiers are not yet sufficiently [politically] conscious, they should have contact with the workers'. The most urgent task was the 'necessity of organisational unity of the proletariat', and for that purpose 'it was necessary to elect deputies to the Petrograd Soviet, factory committees, and residents' committees'. But the instructions stated that the workers should 'not at this moment revolt against other classes of the population'.⁶

It appears, therefore, that the Soviet delegates consisted of insurgents with divergences of political opinions ranging from the radical Marxian socialism of committed revolutionaries to the political unsophistication of people thrown into the centre of the political movement overnight. Yet the Soviet provided a focal point for their political activities. Although during the February Revolution the political opinions of the Petrograd masses had not crystallised into a definite, consistent programme for radical action, their latent radicalism clearly manifested itself on a number of occasions. In the course of the further development of events in 1917, disillusionment with the speed and changes in post-revolutionary society, magnified by their newly acquired sense of freedom and empowerment and constant exposure to propaganda from the radical left, caused this radicalism to build into explosive political action against all authority.

5 Zlokazov 1969, p. 39; Burdzhakov 1967, pp. 223–5; Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, p. 511.

6 Leiberov 1970a, vol. 2, pp. 515–16.

According to Wildman, 'the Soviet leadership strangely neglected its soldier constituency'. He argues: 'neither in the first issue of *Izversntiia* nor in any Soviet pronouncement of the twenty-eighth was the call for soldiers' deputies renewed, and all actions of the Executive Committee were predicated on the assumption of a workers' soviet only'.⁷ The latter statement is not precisely correct, since the first pronouncement on 27 February did include an appeal for the soldiers to elect one representative from one company to the Soviet, and the second issued on 28 February referred to the Soviet as established by 'the representatives elected from factories and mills [and] the military units that had revolted'. Nevertheless, the list of elections conducted on 28 February was dominated by the workers' representatives, and Wildman's point is well taken. In fact, the Soviet was called the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies. The importance of soldiers was to be thrust on the Soviet leadership as the soldiers' question assumed urgency only on 28 February to 1 March.

Workers Create Workers' Militia

The workers' enthusiastic reaction to the Soviet's appeal to create a militia intensified the confusion of the revolutionary power play. As has been seen before, the Soviet leaders as well as the Duma Committee envisioned the role of the militia as the restoration of order. The insurgent workers defiantly challenged this consensus in creating the workers' militia, emphasising its role as the instrument of furthering the revolutionary process and of establishing the workers' self-government. Even before the Soviet's decision, the workers had taken the initiative to form a workers' militia. As early as 25 February the factory committee in the Putilov Factory passed a resolution calling for the formation of a detachment of armed workers [*boevaia družina*] to 'establish order and disarm the police in the Narva District'. On 27 February at least three cases are recorded where insurgent workers attempted to create a militia, and in two cases out of these three the militia resulted directly from the workers' struggle against the police.⁸ This militant desire to destroy the old order and to establish autonomy underscored the primary purpose of the workers' militia thereafter, a purpose far more important in their minds than the mere restoration of order and the struggle against lawlessness and anarchy.

⁷ Wildman 1980, pp. 175, 176.

⁸ Leiberov 1966, p. 39; Startsev 1965, pp. 43–4.

The Petrograd Soviet's decision served as a catalyst that directed the vaguely existing desires of the workers into definite action. On 28 February and 1 March the workers' militia was organised in various districts of Petrograd.⁹ The formation of a militia in the Vyborg District was already reported at the second session of the Petrograd Soviet on 28 February, although it began to take definite shape only on 1 March with the participation of workers from major factories. The militia organised by about 250 workers of Rozenkrantz absorbed similar militia organisations formed in the neighbouring factories – Petrograd Metal, the Arsenal, Phoenix, and others – and established the First Vyborg Subdistrict Commissariat, appointing V.G. Botsvadze, dispatched by the city дума, as the first commissar.¹⁰ Botsvadze had gained great popularity and trust among the workers because he had participated with them in attacks on the Kresty Prison and the House of Detention on 27 February. Since the rest of the representatives appointed by the city дума quickly lost their effectiveness, one can safely assume that Botsvadze's appointment as commissar stemmed from his ability to identify with the workers rather than from the authority of the city дума. Later, however, as the conflict between the workers' militia and the City Militia sharpened, the presidium of the commissariat dismissed Botsvadze.¹¹

Also on 1 March major factories in the Second Vyborg Subdistrict along Sampsonievskii Prospekt organised militia. In New Lessner about 50 workers registered, and the militia immediately engaged in patrols in neighbouring streets; in Old Lessner, the militia composed of more than 250 workers occupied Sampsonievskii Bridge and adjoining streets. These militia organisations merged with others formed in such major factories as the New and Old Parviainen, Erikson, Aivaz, and created the Second Vyborg Subdistrict Commissariat. It is reported that some soldiers from the Reserve Battalion of the Moscow Regiment and the First Machine Gun Regiment joined the workers' militia in this subdistrict.¹² A workers' militia was organised in Porokhovye District north of Okhta and Vyborg District outside the city limits, where two large gunpowder factories were located. On 28 February the workers of these factories formed the Executive Commission of the district soviet, which organised

9 For a detailed discussion of the formation of the militia, see Hasegawa 1973, pp. 303–22.

10 Zlokazov 1966, p. 50; Startsev 1965, pp. 43–4; Kel'son 1925, p. 175.

11 Kel'son 1925, p. 175; Startsev 1965, p. 56.

12 Startsev 1965, p. 44. The formation of a militia in the factories Aivaz and Old Parviainen was reported in 'O rabochikh raionakh'. *Izvestiia Petrgradskogo Soveta rabochikh deputatov*, No. 2, 2 March 1917, p. 3.

the militia, 'immediately occupying the posts of paralysed local power, disarming police, factory officials, and removing sentinel posts'.¹³

The workers completely controlled the militia organisations in the Vyborg District, but on Vasil'evskii Island the workers' militia coexisted with the City Militia. On 28 February the Military Commission of the Duma Committee appointed Professor V.V. Nikitin of the Mining Institute to organise a militia on Vasil'evskii Island 'for the restoration and the maintenance of order'.¹⁴ Whether Professor Nikitin's influence had a direct bearing or not, the students of the Mining Institute formed an organisational committee composed of fifteen students and three professors at a general meeting held on 28 February. This committee formed a militia among other specifically designated commissions. Although its chairman expressed a wish to keep contact with the Petrograd Soviet, it appears likely that this militia was absorbed into the City Militia, which established the First Vasil'evskii Commissariat under its head, Judge V.V. Drozdov. This commissariat restored order in the area along Bol'shoi Prospekt and regularly dispatched patrols, each composed of ten soldiers under the leadership of one student. In three other subdistricts, however, the workers' militia took the upper hand.¹⁵ In the second Vasil'evskii Subdistrict, where large factories were concentrated, the militia organised by the workers of the large factories – Pipe Factory, Siemens-Galiske, Vasil'evskii Railway Cars, Possel' and others – occupied the police station on Line Five and established the commissariat there. A Bolshevik, Sergeev, became the first commissar.¹⁶ Although the workers' militia controlled the Third Vasil'evskii Subdistrict as well, with an SR student named Medvedskii as its first commissar, its strength appears to have been less than that of its counterparts in the Second and Fourth Subdistricts. The Cable Factory constituted the major force in the militia organisation in the Fourth Vasil'evskii Subdistrict, also known as the Harbor [*Gavanskii*] Subdistrict. The workers of this factory selected militia members at a general meeting held on 1 March and passed a resolution demanding that the Petrograd Soviet transfer weapons to the district soviet.¹⁷ The workers' militia on Vasil'evskii Island worked in close cooperation with the Vasil'evskii District Soviet, which appointed an SR member, Alekseev, as chief of its Military Commission. The coexistence of the workers' militia and the City Militia inevitably led to friction. Under the pressure of the workers' militia, the Executive Commission of

13 Raionnye sovery 1966, vol. 3, pp. 180–1.

14 Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1930, p. 96.

15 Startsev 1965, p. 43; Raionnye sovery 1966, vol. 1, p. 365.

16 Startsev 1965, p. 45.

17 Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie 1957, pp. 455–6.

the District Soviet established a supervisory commission specifically to watch the activities of the City Militia in the first subdistrict.¹⁸

The situation was even more complicated in the Petrograd District, where not only the workers' militia and the City Militia, but also the militia organised by the commissar appointed by the Soviet Executive Committee, competed with one another. The machinists of Langenzippen Machine Factory constituted the nucleus of the workers' militia in this district, but its strength hardly matched the two competing organisations. The workers' militia here failed even to create an independent commissariat. At first it established a militia centre at Number 15 Oranienbaum Street, but soon the Second Petrograd Subdistrict Commissariat of the City Militia moved in, establishing its headquarters there. Having lost its centre, the workers' militia moved into one room of Number 18 Bol'shaia Beloozerskaia Street, where the First Petrograd Subdistrict Commissariat of the City Militia, and its All-District Commissariat, had established their headquarters.¹⁹ The transfer of the office of the workers' militia to the headquarters of the City Militia strongly indicates that either it completely merged with the City Militia or at least maintained very close cooperation with it.

Neither the workers' nor the City Militia, however, had great influence in the Petrograd District. These two militias were eventually absorbed into the commissariat organised by A.V. Peshekhonov, the commissar appointed by the Soviet Executive Committee. Peshekhonov, a member of the Popular Socialist party as well as a member of the Soviet Executive Committee and of its Literary Commission, represented the right wing of the Executive Committee. When he accepted the appointment as commissar of the Petrograd District on 28 February, he sought to obtain authority from the Duma Committee as well. But Duma Committee leader Miliukov refused this authorisation, because, according to Peshekhonov, the Duma Committee had not come to grips with the importance of extending its authority to the local level.²⁰ It is unlikely that Miliukov failed to appreciate this problem; in fact, he was keenly aware of the dangers of dual power.²¹ His refusal stemmed not from his ignorance but from his determined efforts not to support the authority of the Petrograd Soviet.

After establishing his headquarters in a movie theatre, the Elite, at the corner of Kamennoostrovskii and Bol'shoi Prospekts, Peshekhonov immediately issued

18 Raionnye sovety 1966, vol. 1, p. 73.

19 Startsev 1965, p. 44.

20 Peshekhonov 1923, pp. 266–7.

21 In his speeches addressed to the soldiers on 28 February he warned of the danger of 'dual power'. See Chapter 19.

a proclamation to the populace in Petrograd District in which he appealed 'to maintain calm despite the developing events, to react with trust to the district commissars appointed by the new power [which he did not specify, probably intentionally] and execute their orders, and to fulfil the obligations necessary for public service'.²² The proclamation also urged factories, mills and other social organisations to send their delegates to the commissariat. It is apparent that Peshekhonov mainly concerned himself with the restoration of order. Responding to the proclamation, which was distributed throughout the district, a few hundred volunteers, including intelligentsia, workers and soldiers, assembled at the commissariat and formed a militia.²³

Peshekhonov's commissariat established itself as the most influential authority in the Petrograd District by absorbing some organisations and subordinating others. He entered into negotiations with a group of intellectuals who had organised a commissariat on 28 February and occupied the building of the city administration [*gorodskaiia uprava*] as their headquarters. This group agreed to be incorporated into Peshekhonov's commissariat. A similar organisation, which came into existence on Krestovskii Island, pledged allegiance to the commissariat while maintaining its separate entity.²⁴ Another organisation by the name of the 'residents' committee' also claimed autonomous local power. This committee was organised by liberal intellectuals calling themselves 'the progressive-democratic group', who had most likely originated from the radical wing of the Kadets and other liberals who had been involved in the unsuccessful campaign for the residents' committees in the autumn of 1915. The entire district was divided into sixteen to eighteen subdistricts, each of which held residents' meetings. The residents – men and women over twenty – elected their representatives to the residents' committee. Peshekhonov did not attempt to take over this organisation, believing that he could come to terms with it in case of conflict.²⁵

Thus in the Petrograd District the commissariat that had been created from above by the Petrograd Soviet established the most effective police power – a result made possible largely by Peshekhonov's energetic leadership and initiative. Yet the commissariat found itself under continual pressure from the revolutionised masses. In fact, its survival depended on constant accommodation to the mood of the 'crowd'. When Peshekhonov refused to surrender weapons in

22 'Ot Komissariata Petrogradskoi storony', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, No. 3, 2 March 1917, p. 4.

23 Peshekhonov 1923, p. 271.

24 Ibid., pp. 304–5.

25 Peshekhonov 1923, p. 305; see Chapter 3 for residents' committees.

the commissariat to a group of soldiers, he faced rifles pointed at him by the surrounding soldiers. When he released innocent victims charged with counterrevolutionary activities, he could not maintain authority 'as the representative of the revolutionary power' unless he treated the accused harshly. It is interesting to note that the most powerful commissar in Petrograd District had to write the following in his memoirs:

All the power in essence completely rested in the hands of the crowd. The crowd executed it in the form of self-government, and many undoubtedly were convinced that this was truly the people's power.²⁶

Many factories in other districts also responded to the appeal of the Petrograd Soviet by electing militia according to the prescribed ratio. Thus the Putilov Factory formed the workers' commissariat on 28 February. A workers' militia was created also in Neva Shipyard, San-Galli, the Obukhov Factory, Dinamo, Siemens-Schückert and Pobeda.²⁷ In Kolomenskii and Moscow districts, however, the workers' influence remained weak, and the City Militia established effective control. Representatives of the 'workers from factories and mills, representatives of the sick funds, consumer associations, city health department, and other social organisations' in Rozhdestvo District who met on 2 March called for 'securing in the district order and safety of the population and organising a special detachment (militia) for that purpose'.²⁸

Thus Petrograd was divided into two areas under conflicting police power: one area under the authority of the workers' militia that pledged allegiance to the Petrograd Soviet or under the commissariat directly created by the Soviet, and the other under the authority of the City Militia created by the city дума in close cooperation with the Duma Committee. This conflict of power at the local level indeed constituted one of the most fundamental reasons for the birth of dual power.

As early as 28 February the Soviet Executive Committee made clear its intention to cooperate with the Duma Committee in solving this conflict by sacrificing the independence of the workers' militia. At the second Soviet session held on this day a keynote speaker, Steklov, representing the Executive Committee, stated that to achieve the intended goals it was necessary 'to rely not only on workers', but also on other groups, without whose cooperation

26 Ibid., pp. 288–9, 299.

27 Startsev 1965, 45–6; Kel'son 1925, p. 172.

28 With the exception of the Rozhdestvo and Kolomenskii districts, it is not known in detail how the City Militia extended its authority to the districts.

Soviet power would not be able to hold out. Gribkov pointed out the increasing anarchy in the streets, with drunken soldiers and youths shooting in the air. Steklov confessed the tenuous hold of the Executive Committee over the militia organisations created by local initiatives, and expressed pessimism and powerlessness.²⁹ Since tension between the Executive Committee and the general deputies mounted to an explosive point at the second general session on the issue of Rodzianko's order, it appears that the Executive Committee decided not to present its policy about the conflict of militia authorities at the second session.³⁰ Instead, it issued a proclamation on the following day that stated:

The Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies decided to unify the central organ of the workers' commissariats with this Duma organisation [the City Militia] ... Remember, comrades, that you take part in the militia at the instruction of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Remember that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies is your highest authority.³¹

This decision to subordinate the workers' militia to the City Militia while upholding its ultimate allegiance to the Soviet foreshadowed the famous policy formulated later by the Executive Committee of 'conditional support' [*poskol'ku-postol'ku*] for the Provisional Government. As noted in the previous chapter, the joint Socialist students organisations also appealed to the students to obey only the orders of the Petrograd Soviet.³²

Nevertheless, the mere publication of a proclamation could not convince the workers to accept the authority of the City Militia. On 2 March, the Executive Committee appointed two Mensheviks, V.P. Piat'ev and M.V. Chernev, as liaison between the Executive Committee and the City Militia. These two, together with the City Militia's secretary, Z. Kel'son, visited headquarters of the workers' militia in various workers' districts in an effort to persuade them to merge with the City Militia.³³ At the same time, to introduce some uniformity in the procedures of all the militia organisations and, more importantly, to prevent the workers' militia from committing revolutionary excesses, these three men

29 Document No. 8, Petrogradskii Soviet 1991, p. 26, 31–2; Zlokazov 1969, p. 53; Tokarev 1976, pp. 517–18.

30 See below.

31 'Reshenie Ispolnitel'nogo komiteta Sov. Rab. Dep', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh deputatov*, No. 2, 1 March 1917, p. 1.

32 See Chapter 19.

33 Kel'son 1925, p. 167.

drafted 'instructions' regulating the procedures concerning arrest, use of fire-arms, and appropriation of automobiles, as well as clarifying the aims of militia activities.

Article 1 of the draft instructions read: 'The duty of a militiaman is to defend each and every one from all violence, offense, and arbitrariness', a regulation clearly intended to restrain excesses. On the other hand, the same article stipulated that 'A militiaman must understand that he is an executive organ of a new Free Russia and is obligated to combat all attempts at counterrevolution', a statement designed to lure the workers' militia to the City Militia by emphasising common purpose. On 3 March the City Militia convened the first general meeting of the district commissars in the city дума, into which the representatives of the workers' militia were also invited. More than fifty commissars who attended this meeting approved the draft instructions as well as the incorporation of the workers' militia into the City Militia.³⁴ With the unification of the two militia organisations the City Militia was renamed the people's City Militia [*gorodskaiia narodnaia militsiia*].

The workers' reluctance to accept the unification provoked a series of protests at the beginning of March. An episode at a meeting of the commissars on 3 March demonstrated their hostility when Kryzhanovskii carelessly addressed the workers as 'gentlemen' [*gospoda*]. Angry protests erupted with the shouts: 'No gentlemen are here!' This forced Kryzhanovskii to use the unaccustomed word 'Comrades' [*tovarshchi*].³⁵ The workers accepted the unification only because of strong pressure from the Soviet Executive Committee. Yet unification remained only theoretical; the workers' militia for all practical purposes maintained its independence and autonomy, continuing to control the workers' sections of the city exclusively, with no interference from the City Militia.³⁶ This incident also revealed that language mattered, indicating a deep gulf separating 'the gentlemen' from the 'comrades'.

Rodzianko's Order and the Soldiers Question

Together with the problem of the militia, the soldiers' ultimate allegiance was another crucial issue for the solution of the problem of power. Rodzianko's order, written actually by Engel'gardt and Bublikov and issued on 28 Febru-

34 Ibid., pp. 167–8; Startsev 1965, p. 48.

35 Kel'son 1925, p. 174.

36 See Hasegawa 1973, pp. 315–22.

ary, which directed officers and soldiers to return to the barracks, provoked a violent reaction from the insurgent soldiers, who took it as a call for the restoration of the old order.³⁷ Not only did Rodzianko's order attempt to subordinate soldiers to officers in the old way, but the insurgents interpreted it also as an attempt to confiscate their weapons. V.D. Shatov, who volunteered for the newly created district food supply committee in the Vyborg District, reported an alarming situation. Agitators, mostly soldiers, were going around the district assailing Rodzianko's order. They claimed that the order, not issued by the Petrograd Soviet but by Rodzianko personally, was an attempt to disarm the soldiers and then shoot them with machine guns. The agitators demanded Rodzianko's arrest, and appealed to the crowds to support the Soviet.³⁸

The dissatisfaction of the insurgents with Rodzianko's order was clearly expressed in the second general session of the Petrograd Soviet held on 28 February. It was dominated by deputies from the factories, since very few military units had elected their deputies. Yet the worker deputies took Rodzianko's order as aimed directly at the workers themselves. Bogdanov, representing the Executive Committee, explained to the agitated audience that the Duma Committee had already rescinded Rodzianko's order, with a guarantee to the Executive Committee that it would not be circulated. His attempt to cut the discussions short, however, was unsuccessful. Although some deputies counselled caution, lest the relationship between the Petrograd Soviet and the Duma Committee should deteriorate, a majority of speakers denounced Rodzianko's order as an attempt to restore the old way of controlling the soldiers. Deputy Pavlov accused Rodzianko of betraying the revolution and demanded his personal appearance at the Soviet session. Molotov, representing the Bolsheviks, declared that the Soviet should take appropriate measures for this kind of counterrevolutionary action and demanded Rodzianko's public retraction. Deputy Sakharevskii proposed that all orders and proclamations be issued by the Soviet. Faced with these extreme demands and denunciations, members of the Executive Committee tried to placate the anger of the deputies by warning them of the danger of extreme measures. Expressing agreement with the necessity of tighter control over the Duma Committee, Rafes considered the worsening relations between the two bodies unnecessary and dangerous.

Bogdanov introduced a motion to delegate Kerenskii and Chkheidze to register a protest to the Duma Committee about Rodzianko's order and to entrust the Executive Committee with the task of clarifying the relationship

37 See Chapter 19.

38 GARF, f. 3348, op. 1, d. 129, ll. 15–16.

between the Soviet and the Duma Committee and of defining the role of the Duma Committee in relation to the army. Bogdanov's motion was obviously intended to calm the anger of the deputies by taking the entire matter out of their hands. This motion, however, did not satisfy the audience. Deputy Savinkov (not to be confused with the famous Socialist Revolutionary terrorist) declared that what the Soviet should do was not to send Kerenskii and Chkheidze to the Duma Committee, but to receive the Duma Committee's immediate reply, and not to demand clarification, but to nullify the order. This speech virtually killed Bogdanov's motion. Steklov's appeal not to take action until Kerenskii registered a protest in the Duma Committee went unheeded. Some even demanded Rodzianko's arrest. Only the news brought by Skobelev at the end of the session that the Petropavlovsk Fortress had fallen to the side of the revolution softened the tense situation. The Executive Committee barely managed to postpone the decision.³⁹ It is indicative of the Executive Committee's dilemma that the minutes of this meeting printed in *Izvestiia* on the following day mentioned no word about the discussion of Rodzianko's order except for a vague reference to the discussion on 'the organisation of the army'. It merely stated that 'it was decided to clarify the mutual relationship between the Committee of the State Duma and the Soviet of Workers' Deputies'.⁴⁰

Rodzianko's order created tension between the Soviet representatives and the Duma Committee leaders in the Military Commission. At five o'clock in the morning Engel'gardt was awakened by members of the Military Commission. He was told that Rodzianko's order was creating an angry reaction among the soldiers. Engel'gardt wrote later, 'My attempt to bring the soldiers within the confines of discipline was regarded, not without foundation, as an attempt to stop the development of revolution'. For the first time since the beginning of the revolution Engel'gardt was accused of being a 'counterrevolutionary'. Copies of Rodzianko's order were seized by members of the Soviet and destroyed. Additional printing of the order was halted.⁴¹

A rumour spread that officers were disarming and arresting soldiers in the barracks. Engel'gardt dispatched his representatives to various barracks, who found the rumour false. Steklov accompanied by some soldiers, presumably

39 Document No. 8, Petrogradskii Sovet 1991, pp. 30, 33–4, 36–40; Zlokazov 1966, pp. 57–60. See also Rafes 1922, p. 193; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 290.

40 'Iz protokola zasedanii Soveta Robochikh Deputatov 28 fevralia', No. 2, 1 March 1917, p. 2; Document 9, *Petrograd soviet* 1991, pp. 40–1.

41 Engel'gardt, 'Potonusvshii mir', OR RNB, f., 218, ll. 107–8; Engel'gardt interview, Lyadres 2013, p. 60.

after the stormy general session of the Soviet assembly, came to the Military Commission, and strongly protested Rodzianko's order. Engel'gardt explained that he had no intention of disarming the insurgent soldiers, and that rumours about the officers confiscating soldiers' weapons were totally false. Steklov asked Engel'gardt to put his words in the form of a proclamation. Engel'gardt readily complied with this request, and issued the following statement:⁴²

On 1 March a rumour is spreading among the soldiers of the Petrograd Garrison that the officers in the regiments are confiscating weapons from the soldiers. These rumours have been checked in two regiments and turned out to be false. As the chairman of the Military Commission of the State Duma I declare that the most decisive measures *including the execution of the guilty* shall be taken not to tolerate such actions on the part of the officers [italics by TH].⁴³

It bears emphasising that Engel'gardt promised the draconian measure of the 'execution', not 'dismissal' or 'arrest' of those officers who attempted to disarm the soldiers. This measure indicated the seriousness with which the Military Commission treated the issue and its desperate attempt to diffuse the crisis.⁴⁴ This proclamation was printed on the first page of *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Komiteta zhurnal'istov* on 1 March as well as on the first page of *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta* on 2 March and on 1 March Bonch-Bruevich made the printing office of *Kopeika* available to print 100,000 copies.⁴⁵ This concerted effort to publicise the proclamation attested to the seriousness that both the Duma Committee as well as the Soviet Executive Committee attached to the violent and widespread reaction to Rodzianko's order.

On the issue of the relationship between officers and soldiers, the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet took a position similar to its attitude toward the conflicting authorities of the militia organisations. Sukhanov stated:

42 Engel'gardt, 'Potonusvshii mir', OR RNB, f., 218, l. 116.

43 'Postanovleniia Vremennogo komiteta Gos. Dumy', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh deputatov*, No. 2, 1 March 1917, p. 3.

44 Engel'gardt interview, Lyanderes 2013, p. 62. Apparently, someone redacted the text by excluding 'execution'. This revision outraged Steklov, and Engel'gardt had to correct the revision to restore the original order that includes 'execution'.

45 'Prikaz ne otbirat' oruzhiia', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Komiteta zhurnal'istov*, No. 4, 1 March 1917, p. 1; 'Ob"iavlenie', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Sovet rabochikh deputatov*, No. 3, 2 March 1917, p. 1; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 291.

The Executive Committee of the Soviet made every effort to see that officers returned to their own units and to their duties and that soldiers should again recognise the officers. In this relationship the Executive Committee was in complete agreement with the goals of the Duma Committee.⁴⁶

Engel'gardt's proclamation and the Executive Committee's appeal notwithstanding, soldiers began to take matters into their own hands. The soldiers feared, most of all, the confiscation of their weapons, which they believed would lead to the reprisals by the officers against the soldiers who took part in the insurrection. But beyond this pressing issue, the soldiers were also concerned with the restoration of traditional discipline that governed the officer-soldier relations. 'As the soldiers drifted back to their barracks', Melancon notes, 'they found officers who, whether reactionary or not, utilised traditional methods of address and discipline'.⁴⁷

In the midst of this volatile situation, sometime early on 1 March, the left SRS and the Mezhraiontsy distributed a leaflet among the soldiers. It pointed out that despite the fact that 'the workers and soldiers have already held Petrograd in their hands for two days', the Duma had formed a 'provisional committee and calls it a provisional government'. But this government had not said a single word about the land that the peasants were most vitally interested in, because the Duma was not a representative body for the workers and peasants. It then called out:

To prevent the nobles and officers – that Romanov gang – from deceiving you, take power in your own hands. Elect your own platoon, company, and regimental commanders, elect company committees ... All company commanders should be under the control of these company committees. Accept only those officers who you know as friends of the people. Obey only delegates sent from the soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies!⁴⁸

The SR-Mezhraiontsy leaflet accurately reflected the sentiments of the soldiers, and may well have served as a catalyst for the soldiers' actions against their officers. The 'sorting out' of officers unsympathetic to the revolution had already started on 1 March in some units. The soldiers began electing new com-

46 Sukhanov 1922, vol. 1, p. 162.

47 Melancon 2009, p. 37.

48 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 339–40. English translation is given by Melancon 2009, pp. 37–8.

manders from among officers who joined the revolution with the soldiers. In the Moscow Regiment the soldiers went even further, disarming and arresting officers who disappeared during the insurrection. The soldiers who escorted the arrested officers shot one of the prisoners on the way to the Tauride Palace. In other units, for instance in the 18th Service Corps [*ekipazh*], several officers who attempted to disarm soldiers in carrying out Rodzianko's order met with brutal deaths at the soldiers' hands.⁴⁹ As Melancon argues, this leaflet likely played a role in the soldiers' thinking, leading eventually to Order No. 1.

Soviet Session on the Soldiers' Question, 1 March

Thus, the soldiers question [*soldatskii vopros*] became one of the most critical questions facing the Soviet and the Duma Committee by 1 March. The soldiers had to be tamed and prevented from committing large-scale pogroms against the officers, yet to create a stable government the disorganised rabble had to be reorganised into a military force and made subordinate to the orders of this government. Rodzianko's order served as a catalyst for the soldiers to elect their delegates to the Soviet so that they could air their protest. Late on the 28 February and early on the 1 March, soldiers of various units, some in their barracks and others in the Tauride Palace, where they had been bivouacking since 27 February, conducted elections. The third general session of the Petrograd Soviet was scheduled at noon on 1 March. The Executive Committee, however, decided to postpone the opening of the session so as to reach a decision on the problem of power, which it had been debating since that morning.⁵⁰ Another important agenda at the Executive Committee meeting was over Rodzianko's trip to Dno to meet Nicholas, which raised concerns over the possible counterrevolutionary attack on the revolution and the collusion of the Duma Committee with counterrevolution. So the Executive Committee was struggling with the balancing act of imposing its conditions to support the Provisional Government and preventing the monarch from reasserting his power with the help of the Duma Committee. Skobelev, sent by the Executive Committee for this manoeuvre to postpone the general session, managed to have the delegates vote for postponement, despite some bitter resentment.

49 'Dnevnik soldata na Vyborgskoi storone', *Pravda*, No. 6, March 11, 1917, pp. 4–5; Burdzhalov 1967, pp. 292, 300–1.

50 See Chapter 21.

Just then, suddenly the doors of the assembly hall flung open and a large group of soldiers burst into the hall. Overwhelmed by the number of soldiers, who for the first time appeared in the Soviet session en masse, and panic-stricken by their anger, Skobelev immediately announced that the session was open. The soldiers turned this general session to an exclusive meeting of soldiers, not allowing other delegates to speak. Skobelev, unable to cope with the situation, begged Sokolov to preside over the meeting.⁵¹

The Soviet session discussed the following three issues: (1) whether the soldiers should obey the orders of the Military Commission of the Duma or of the Petrograd Soviet; (2) how to react to Rodzianko's demand to surrender arms; and (3) the soldiers' attitude toward officers.⁵² In his opening speech, Sokolov for the first time explained the Duma Committee's takeover of the Military Commission. According to Sokolov, the representatives of the Duma Committee did not wish to take part in the Soviet Military Commission at that critical moment, when the situation was not clear. But when the insurrection triumphed, the Soviet Military Commission contacted Engel'gardt of the Duma Military Commission, 'a veteran of the Russo-Japanese War and an expert on military matters' He agreed to become the chairman of the commission.⁵³ Sokolov thus justified the Duma Committee's takeover of the Military Commission by implying that the Petrograd Soviet had begged for their participation. But Sokolov saw a danger in the political leaning of the officers. Some had not completely taken the side of the revolution, and many still openly spoke against it. In the Military Commission there were no soldiers, and without them it would be difficult to carry on revolutionary measures. The important task of the moment was to draw the soldiers more closely into the commission's task.

51 Skobelev 1927, p. 1; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 182–3. According to Shliapnikov and Sadvovskii, whose unpublished memoirs are used by Miller, the soldiers held a separate preliminary meeting before the general session, at which Sokolov presided. It is not clearly established whether or not this meeting was indeed held, and if it was, what was actually discussed. Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 206; Miller 1966b, p. 28.

52 The following account of the general session is based on Document 13, Petrogradskii Soviet 1991, pp. 47–56; Document 14, *ibid.*, pp. 55–6; Document 30, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 88–9; Miller 1966b, pp. 25–43. Also see Wildman 1980, pp. 182–6, but to Wildman the minutes of the meeting were not available. As for Order No. 1 and the *soldatskii vopros*, see Miller 1966a, pp. 109–13; Boyd 1963, pp. 359–72, which is primarily based on Miller's articles; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 206–14; Sukhanov 1922, pp. 264–7; Sokolov 1927; Paderin 1924, pp. 401–2; Mikhailov 1967, pp. 208–11; Miller 1974, pp. 16–35; Tokarev 1976, pp. 57–9.

53 Tokarev 1976, p. 57.

There was then the possibility of a direct confrontation between the Soviet and the Duma Committee, but Sokolov considered such confrontation undesirable and defended compromise with the Duma Committee as the only course open to the Soviet. 'We are having a democratic revolution with the bourgeoisie. Until our common enemy is completely eliminated, we must cooperate with each other'. As long as the Duma Committee carried out the struggle against tsarism, and as long as the Military Commission, which was the only organ with experience and connections, had plans to combat counterrevolutionary attempts from the front, the Soviet should support cooperation with the Duma Committee. Sokolov thus argued that the soldiers should send their delegates to the Military Commission and lead it in a revolutionary direction rather than divorce themselves from it hastily.⁵⁴

One of the first speakers, S.A. Klivanskii (Maksim, SR), sharply disagreed with Sokolov in his attitude toward the Duma Committee and the Military Commission. Assailing Rodzianko as a landlord and a leader of the 'party of order' dominated by 'those who want the workers and the peasants to be like a herd of animals and themselves to be masters', he expressed the fear that once the Duma Committee succeeded in disarming the soldiers and mobilising the support of the most reliable regiments, it would be able to take all the power for the interests of 'landlords and capitalists', and smother the revolution. Klivanskii argued that the only way to prevent this would be to create a joint soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies or a soviet of soldiers of the Petrograd Garrison, to which alone the soldiers should subordinate themselves. They should not obey the orders of the Military Commission and should even abolish it.

Sokolov and F.F. Linde (non-party but SR-leaning, a deputy from the Finland Regiment)⁵⁵ supported Klivanskii's proposal to create a united soviet of workers' and soldiers' deputies. Linde also rejected the idea of subordinating

54 Document 13, Petrogradskii Soviet 1991, pp. 47–8; Document 14, Petrogradskii Soviet, pp. 55–6; Tokarev 1976, pp. 57–8. Tokarev criticises Miller for an inadequate account of Sokolov's ambivalent attitude toward the officers' question. Unlike Miller, who sees in Sokolov a typical representative of the Soviet Executive Committee, who wished to achieve peace between the officers and the soldiers, Tokarev argues that Sokolov clearly saw the danger of the officers' political orientation. Although Sokolov ultimately supported the Executive Committee's policy to achieve a compromise with the Duma Committee, Sokolov seems to have emphasised the importance of the consolidation of the Soviet by actively organising the insurgents more than his colleagues, Sukhanov and Steklov.

55 Melancon lists Linde as affiliated with no party. Melancon 2009, p. 40. According to Lyandres, he was a non-party deputy and an SR sympathiser. See Lyandres 2013, pp. 215–16.

themselves to the Military Commission. A deputy from the Lithuanian Regiment, possibly I.G. Borisov, not only opposed recognition of the authority of the Military Commission, but also expressed dissatisfaction with the Soviet's support for it. He complained of the ambiguities of the situation: 'I don't know whom to deal with, whom to listen to. Everything is unclear. Let's have some clarity'. If the officers who used coarse language were to be expelled, not one officer would remain. Another SR soldier, Iu.A. Kudriavtsev, representative from the automobile section of the Red Cross, persuasively argued against the previous speakers in support of Sokolov's position. The most urgent question before the soldiers, he stated, was not whom to listen to, but what to do and how to organise. While arguing that the question about whom to obey was already answered, since 'we sanction, we are the forces', he nevertheless did not believe that the Military Commission should be liquidated; rather the Soviet should send its representatives and control its action.

Sokolov's and Kudriavtsev's arguments apparently prevailed and the meeting passed the following resolution:

The soldiers should be organised in the Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies. The opinion of the Military Commission shall be recognised so long as it does not deviate from the opinion of the Soviet. The soldiers' deputies shall be sent to the composition of the Military Commission.⁵⁶

The Soviet session formally changed its name to the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.⁵⁷

Discussions on the second point – whether the soldiers should surrender their arms to the officers – was brief. Klivanskii proposed: 'weapons not be surrendered'. Kudriavtsev, who supported a moderate position on the previous issue, fully endorsed the proposal. A deputy from the Eger Regiment further proposed that the regimental committee elected by the lower ranks should control the weapons. All these proposals were synthesised into the following resolution: 'The weapons should not be surrendered to the officers, but to the battalion committees.'⁵⁸

The soldiers' representatives had their most heated debate on the third point – attitude toward the officers. Anger was primarily directed toward those

56 Document 13, Petrogradskii Soviet 1991, pp. 53–54; Miller 1966b, pp. 31–3.

57 In contrast, the Moscow Soviet maintained the exclusive workers' organisation, the Soviet of workers' deputies.

58 Document 13, Petrogradskii Soviet 1991, p. 54; Miller 1966b, p. 34.

officers who, having left the barracks during the insurrection, had returned to resume command on Rodzianko's order. The first soldier to speak on this issue, Marchenko, reminded the audience that returning officers were calling soldiers, as before, 'a herd of sheep', trying to 'put the soldiers under the thumb and behaving even worse than before'. A soldier from the Semenovskii Regiment, Melenchuk, commented, 'A herd of officers come in order to deceive us. They join us in order to go around us'. A deputy from the First Reserve Infantry Regiment (V.I. Badenko?) also noted that although the officers wore red bands on their sleeves, they still remained monarchists at their own meetings, thinking about disarming workers and shooting insurgents. Some speakers complained of officers' treatment of soldiers in pre-revolutionary days. Soldier Konovalov pointed out that soldiers had even had to take care of officers' children, suffering punishment for the slightest offense not only from the officers, but also from their children and wives. Referring to Guchkov's appeal to the soldiers of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment to forget old accounts, Linde interjected with a shout: 'Bastard, who could forget the old?'

The discussion centred around one point – if the soldiers should accept some of the officers or not accept them at all. Two different opinions emerged. Badenko and Linde proposed to reject all returning officers. In Linde's words, 'We should not accept those who did not take part in the revolution. We will show our will and elect the new'. Badenko went as far as to say, 'We will kick out from the battalions those who did not join'. A soldier from the Preobrazhenskii Regiment, however, interjected that if they refused to accept returning officers, there would be 'no officers left even for instruction'. Another soldier from the Preobrazhenskii Regiment (A.N. Paderin?), relating experiences in his battalion, introduced a new idea – the election of officers. In his battalion all the officers had disappeared during the insurrection and when they had returned, the soldiers refused to recognise their authority, electing a committee of four from their ranks to administer the battalion.

Klivanskii, representing a moderate view, stated that the officers were needed for combat, but their rights should be limited to military duties. 'When duty ends, an officer is a citizen like a soldier'. He emphasised the common goal between officers and soldiers in the struggle against the external enemy. Yet Klivanskii was the only speaker to argue the necessity of cooperation with some of the officers in order to continue the war. The rest of the speakers who also advocated acceptance of returning officers based their argument on the practical reality of the impossibility of the other alternative. Borisov, agreeing with Klivanskii's proposal to retain the officers, nevertheless considered it necessary to regulate conditions in such a way that the officers should command 'politely, not using derogatory words'. He added, 'If we eliminate all the coarse officers,

then there will remain no officers. Not a single one, even a student, who would not use derogatory words'. He then proposed to create committees elected by the soldiers to control the officers.

The discussion of returning officers now shifted to the creation of soldiers' committees. Klivanskii, who took the floor for the second time on this issue, stressed the need for maintaining discipline, while in principle agreeing with the idea of soldiers' committees. He introduced a draft resolution synthesising the various arguments given on the floor. This draft, entitled 'Order to the Garrison of Petrograd', consisted of five points: (1) elected representatives from the units are to form a soviet of soldiers' deputies and join the Soviet of Workers' Deputies; (2) all the troops must send their representatives to the Soviet; (3) weapons should not be surrendered; (4) the soldiers' committees would assume control of the weapons as well as economy of the units; and (5) discipline should be maintained as previously while on military duty. The soldiers' representatives adopted this draft resolution by an overwhelming majority after adding to it two additional points they had already passed: (1) the opinion of the Military Commission shall be recognised so long as it does not deviate from the opinion of the Soviet, and (2) the soldiers will send their representatives to the Military Commission.⁵⁹

The Military Commission Rejects Soldiers' Demand

Somewhat incongruous with the resolution they had adopted, however, the soldiers agreed to present this decision to the Military Commission for its approval. Apparently those who supported the continuing relationship with the Military Commission successfully persuaded the audience to make one last try to keep the tie between the Military Commission and the soldiers unbroken. Soldiers representing about twenty army units in the Petrograd Garrison appeared in the Military Commission on the evening of 1 March to meet Engel'gardt. They declared that they could 'not trust the officers who did not take part in the revolutionary offensive, and therefore, demand the publication of an order' regulating the election of officers, soldiers' control of the economy of the units, and the new relationship between the commanding officers and the lower ranks.

59 Document 13, Petrogradskii Soviet 1991, p. 54; Document 14, Petrogradskii Soviet, p. 56; Miller 1966b, pp. 39–40.

The draft proposal presented by the soldiers to Engel'gardt 'affected much less the foundations of military discipline than Order No. 1,' Engel'gardt confessed, 'it was concerned only with the elections of the junior officers, and established some control by the soldiers over the economy in the military units'.⁶⁰ Although Engel'gardt recognized that it was natural that the soldiers turned to the Military Commission, which had grown out of the revolution and which had taken obvious revolutionary measures, to issue such an order, he could not bring himself to agree to publish it in the name of the commission. Thus Engel'gardt transmitted the demands to the Duma Committee, but Rodzianko and Guchkov categorically rejected them.

Engel'gardt managed with difficulty to placate the excited soldiers by promising them that the Military Commission and the Duma Committee would set up a new commission for investigating the entire sphere of soldiers' life and specifically the problems presented by the soldiers. Later on in the evening, however, the soldiers' representatives authorized by the Soviet called again on Engel'gardt and stated: 'The delegates of many units are demanding that new regulations of the military organisation should be established. The Soviet is very much interested in this problem and proposed to the Provisional Committee of the Duma to work them out jointly'. Met with Engel'gardt's repeated rejection, the soldiers left the room with the words, 'So much the better, we will write them ourselves'.⁶¹

Drafting and Issuing Order No. 1

The soldiers' meeting elected the following ten representatives to the Executive Committee: A.D. Sadvovskii (Sixth Sapper Battalion, former railway engineer, Bolshevik), A.N. Paderin (Preobrazhenskii Regiment, former student and sick-funds activist, Bolshevik), V.I. Badenko (First Infantry Regiment, Menshevik-Internationalist), F.F. Linde (Finland Regiment, non-party with SR sympathy), Iu.A. Kudriavtsev (Red Cross automobile section, former engineer, Socialist Revolutionary), A.P. Borisov (Lithuanian Regiment, former forester, Menshevik), I.G. Barkov (First Rifle Regiment, former worker), Vakulenko (Eger Regiment, former worker), Klimchinskii (Izmailovskii Regiment, former Putilov worker), and Sailor Sokolov (Baltic Fleet, Kadet).⁶² The contrast between the

60 Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvshii mir', OR RNB, f., 218, l. 118; RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 5, l. 36.

61 RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 5, 36; Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvshii mir', OR RNB, f., 218, l. 118; Engel'dardt interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 62; Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 79.

62 Document 13, Petrogradskii Soviet, p. 55; Document 14, Petrogradskii Soviet 1991, p. 56;

singularity of the soldiers' complaints aired at the meeting and the wide variety of their party affiliations is striking. The soldier representatives, who did not have a deep understanding of the ideological leanings of their respective parties, had similar political outlooks on issues bearing on their lives as soldiers despite the differences in their political affiliations. Furthermore, this list presents another interesting point. Despite the repeated assertions that the army was constituted of peasants in uniform, a majority of the representatives elected to the Executive Committee were former workers and intelligentsia. Judging from their established political affiliations with the revolutionary parties, their political consciousness and experience can be assumed as significantly high. It was these groups who articulated into political programmes the deeply felt sense of oppression of the common soldiers. As the proceedings of the soldiers' meeting on 1 March clearly indicated, they formulated their own political demands by themselves without help from the outside.⁶³

The Executive Committee had no choice but to accept the representatives of the soldiers as members. After discussion of the problem of power, it took up the demands presented by the soldiers' delegates late in the evening. Many members – Chkheidze, Sukhanov, Steklov, for instance – seem to have been absent during the debate on this issue. After a brief discussion, the Executive Committee decided to publish these demands in a single order and entrusted 'a group of comrades, members of the Executive Committee working in the Military Commission, and the soldiers who had been elected to the Executive Committee' with the composition and editing of the order.⁶⁴ Since the Military Commission rejected any possibility of working out a compromise on the soldiers question, Sokolov and the soldiers' representatives, retiring to a small room next to the headquarters of the Executive Committee, began composing a draft order.

Surrounded by Paderin, Borisov, Kudriavtsev, and other soldier representatives, Sokolov sat at a desk and wrote down what the soldiers dictated – a scene that reminded Sukhanov of Tolstoy narrating a story to the children in *Iasnaia Poliana*, a description betraying Sukhanov's own preconceived prejudices against these 'illiterate soldiers'. The already adopted demands were quickly written in a readable style by Sokolov's pen. The only debate was on

Miller, 1966b, p. 41. According to Melancon, Sadovskii and Borison were Mensheviks, Paderin a Bolshevik, Kudriavtsev, Shapiro, and Badenko SRs. Melancon 2009, p. 40.

63 Melancon argues that Klivanskii (Maksim), though not included in the committee of ten because of his civilian status, played the most decisive role in drafting the order. Melancon 2009, p. 40.

64 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 211.

the question of whether this document should be called a proclamation or an order. The soldiers preferred to call it an 'order since they were more likely to obey an order than a proclamation'.⁶⁵ The entire document, known as Order No. 1, was composed within half an hour. Having received the Executive Committee's quick approval, it was presented to the general meeting, which was still in session. 'The soldiers and the workers,' Shliapnikov writes, 'listened to the order in triumphant silence. To understand the revolutionary significance of this order, it was enough to see the faces of the soldiers. Thunderous voices of approval then spread throughout the stuffy, packed room of the Soviet'. Order No. 1 was printed in leaflets and distributed throughout the city on the night of 1 March. *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov* – now renamed as such – also published it on 2 March.⁶⁶

Order No. 1 contained seven points: (1) election of the soldiers' committees in the military units; (2) election of soldiers' representatives to the Soviet; (3) subordination of the soldiers to the Soviet in political actions; (4) subordination to the Military Commission in so far as its orders did not deviate from those of the Soviet; (5) control of weapons by company and battalion committees, and no surrender of weapons to officers in any case; (6) maintenance of military discipline when on duty, but the guarantee of full civil rights of the soldiers when off duty; and (7) abolition of both honorary titles of officers and of the convention of addressing soldiers in coarse and familiar terms.⁶⁷ Quite obviously Order No. 1 was based on the decision of the soldiers' meeting on March 1 with only minor changes. The abolition of honorary titles, coarse addressing habits, standing at attention, and compulsory saluting when off duty does not appear in the resolution of the soldiers' meeting, but the need of this action was clearly pointed out during the debate. One point in the resolution that called for sending soldiers' representatives to the Military Commission was dropped, since Engel'gardt's refusal to comply with the soldiers' demands made this meaningless.

More importantly, Order No. 1 put an end to the hitherto ambiguous question of to whom the insurgent soldiers would pledge allegiance. By rejecting the authority of the Military Commission and hence of the Duma Committee, a

65 Sukhanov 1922, p. 265; Paderin 1924, p. 401.

66 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 212; Sokolov 1927; Miller 1966b, p. 43; 'Prikaz No. 1 Soveta', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, No. 3, 2 March 1917, p. 3; Petrograd Soviet 1991, pp. 56–57, Document 31, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 89–90; 'Prilozhenie 1', Petrogradskii Soviet 1991, pp. 56–57 *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie* 1957, pp. 190–1. For the complete text of Order No. 1 in English, see Wildman 1980, pp. 187–8.

67 For the complete text, sources cited in note 1156.

decisive majority of the insurgent soldiers now rallied solidly behind the Petrograd Soviet. The formula it adopted: subordination of the orders of the Military Commission, 'so long as they do not contradict with the policy of the Petrograd Soviet', was the second example, following the same formula adopted on the question of the militia, foreshadowing the famous Soviet policy toward the Provisional Government – conditional support – support of *postol'ku-poskol'ku* [to the extent].⁶⁸ Since the publication of Order No. 1 the situation of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies sharply improved. Sokolov writes, 'The Soviet suddenly established itself as a real authority relying on a genuinely real force – the Petrograd Garrison.'⁶⁹ Order No. 1 thus made it impossible for the Duma Committee to regain the direct support of the insurgent soldiers. Since the formulation of the provisions of Order No. 1 was based on the soldiers' practical rather than ideological considerations, it would have been theoretically possible for the Duma Committee to acquire their allegiance, had it accepted the soldiers' demands. The acceptance of these demands, however, was contradictory to the ultimate aim of the Duma Committee – the creation of the political basis on which a stable government could be established. It dealt a deadly blow to the prestige of the Duma Committee that has steadily built itself as a revolutionary power since its formation on 27–28 February.

From the Executive Committee leaders' point of view, Order No. 1 was a hot potato in their hands. On one hand, they had tried to avoid exclusive concentration of the insurgents' support for the Soviet, which might inevitably lead to the demand that the Soviet take power. On the other, they found it necessary to diffuse the intense anger and fear felt by the soldiers, which might trigger large-scale slaughter of officers. For the latter reason, the Executive Committee members reluctantly accepted Order No. 1. It is doubtful that the leading members of the Executive Committee, Sukhanov, Steklov, and Chkhaidze, who participated in negotiations with the Duma Committee on the transfer of power, fully acquainted themselves with its contents of Order No. 1, since they did not attend the Executive Committee meeting when it was presented. Nevertheless, they must have been aware of the thrust of the soldiers' demand.⁷⁰ Likewise,

68 Melancon 2009, p. 41. Melancon states that this was the first articulation, but as I stated above, the same formula was adopted on the same day with regard to the militia organisations.

69 Sokolov 1927.

70 Steklov declared at the Executive Committee meeting on 28 March that Order No. 1 was issued despite the Executive Committee: "The representatives of the army forced us to accept it." Document 143, Petrograd Soviet, 1991, p. 625. Sukhanov also states that the Executive Committee had nothing to do with Order No. 1; Sukhanov 1922, p. 263.

the Duma Committee members did not have the precise contents of this document at the time of the negotiations, although they were aware of the extent of the soldiers' dissatisfaction. Thus, negotiations between the Duma Committee and the Soviet Executive Committee for the purpose of placing a provisional government on popular support were from the beginning futile, since Order No. 1, which preceded them, virtually drove an unbridgeable cleavage between the insurgent masses and the Duma liberals.

Here is the crucial question of the February Revolution. Engel'gardt was ambivalent about whether or not he could accept the soldiers' demand. Could the Duma Committee have accepted their demand, and issued Order No. 1 in its own name? Could the Stavka and the High Command have accepted such an order? What would have been the outcome of its acceptance in the question of legitimacy in the eyes of the insurgent soldiers? Did Guchkov and Rodzianko reject the soldiers' demand outright because they violated their deeply felt principles and conviction, or did their rejection stem from the strategic need to mobilise the support of the high command to abort General Ivanov's counterrevolutionary expedition against Petrograd? Whichever the case, the Duma Committee missed the chance to secure the insurgent soldiers' support for the Duma Committee, and subsequently for the Provisional Government. The process through which Order No. 1 was adopted contributed, more than anything else, to the birth of dual power in the February Revolution.

Questions on Election of Officers and the Mezhrainontsy-SR Leaflet

As mentioned above, the Mezhrainontsy and the left SRs distributed a leaflet among the soldiers calling for the election of officers. Order No. 1 in its final form as published did not include the principle of the election of officers, but it is possible to argue, as Tokarev does, that this principle was included in its original version.⁷¹ At any rate, it did not reject the principle, as the Executive Committee later explained. During the debate at the soldiers' meeting on 1 March a representative from Preobrazhenskii Regiment (possibly Paderin) advocated election of officers.⁷² There was actually little difference between Order No. 1 and the left-SR-Mezhrainontsy's leaflet mentioned above except that the latter clearly mentioned the principle of election of officers. It was quite

71 Some Soviet historians argue that Order No. 1 in its original form included the provision concerning the election of officers, but that this provision was dropped by the Executive Committee. See Mikhailov 1967, p. 209; Tokarev 1976, pp. 64–65.

72 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 339–40.

likely that the common soldiers understood Order No. 1 as implying election of officers. In fact, election of officers occurred in a number of military units. The insurgent soldiers were determined not to accept the officers who did not join the insurrection, and therefore, elections of the officers whom they could trust were necessary procedures resulting from the concrete situations facing the soldiers. Examining several examples of military units, Wildman concludes: "Completely apart from Order Number One ... a massive overturn was taking place in the officers' staff of the Petrograd Garrison."⁷³

The Executive Committee, however, found the leaflet of the Mezhraiontsy and the left SRs too provocative and decided to confiscate all copies. It took pains to explain this act in an article entitled 'Officers and Soldiers' in *Izvestiia* on 3 March. This article began with the contrast between Order No. 1, which was alleged to have positively determined a mutual relationship between officers and soldiers, and the leaflet of the two extreme left socialists, who 'attempted to disrupt the unity achieved by many precious sacrifices'. Order No. 1 placed officers in the proper place, giving them power only while on duty. In time of war all soldiers should observe military discipline. The significance of the order, the article continued, lies in its declaration that the soldiers were citizens and no longer slaves. While the order clearly and correctly understood the relationship between officers and soldiers, the proclamation of the radical socialists contained a strange resentment and blanket accusations against all officers, including those who had joined the revolution.⁷⁴ The article purposely magnified the differences between Order No. 1 and the radical socialists' proclamation, unfairly characterizing the latter as a provocation. More importantly, one can detect in this article a clear shift of emphasis. During the debate at the soldiers' meeting, suspicion and hatred against officers dominated the general atmosphere among the soldiers, while the article written by an anonymous Executive Committee member emphasized the unity between soldiers and officers and the importance of maintaining discipline.

The real reason for the Executive Committee's decision to confiscate the SR-Mezhraiontsy leaflet, however, lay elsewhere. The leaflet claimed that the Duma Committee that pretended to act as a provisional government could not possibly serve the interests of the workers, soldiers, and peasants since they

73 Miller 1966a, pp. 111–13. RGLA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 10, ll. 1, 12, 14, Wildman 1980, pp. 192–96. Also see Miller 1974, pp. 33–43 Melancon 2009, pp. 37–38.

74 'Obrashchenie Ispolnitel'nogo komiteta k soldatam i rabochim po povodu prizyvov k nasiliu nad ofitserami', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, No. 4, 3 March 1917, p. 5.

were excluded from the Duma elections. Instead of supporting the Duma Committee, the leaflet urged the soldiers to send their delegates to the 'Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates' that should become the Provisional Revolutionary Government. The leaflet ended with the slogan: 'Long live the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies! Long live the Provisional Revolutionary Government'. It starkly contrasted the Duma Committee and the Petrograd Soviet, and took the position that only the Petrograd Soviet as a provisional revolutionary government could represent the interests of the workers, the soldiers, and the peasants. This was a direct challenge to the position taken by the Executive Committee, which was at this precise moment negotiating with the Duma Committee to form a provisional government. There is no wonder that the Soviet Executive Committee decided to ban the distribution of this leaflet.

Later on 4 March, after the fall of the monarchy became known with Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich's renunciation of the throne, the Executive Committee issued an appeal, 'Comrade Soldiers'. It declared: 'Old Russia does not exist. There is a new, free, revolutionary Russia. But the old power has not died'. Now the task was to safeguard and strengthen what the revolution had acquired. Stressing that the overthrow of the monarchical system was possible because of the unity of forces and noting that the old forces would attempt to drive a wedge between soldiers and officers, it appealed to the soldiers: 'Do not swallow the bait of provocateurs. Remember that officers-revolutionaries are now our comrades ... Do not believe these rumours, do not take any careless measures against our comrade officers'. It also warned against any agitators without proper credentials issued by the Executive Committee.⁷⁵

The retreat of the Executive Committee from Order No. 1 and its attempt to repair the damaged relationship between the soldiers and the officers led to the eventual issuance of Order No. 2 on 5 March, which repudiated the principle of the election of officers, and stressed the need for soldiers to abide by orders on military matters emanating from the military authority and limited the soldiers' committees to political and social issues outside their military duties. This order issued in the name of "the Executive Committee of the Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies" was countersigned by General N.M. Potapov, Chairman of the Military Commission of the Provisional Government.⁷⁶

75 'Vozzvanie Ispolnitel'nogo Komiteta k soldadam,' *Ivestiia Petrogradskikh Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, No. 6, 5 March 1917; Petrogradskii sovet 1991, pp. 104–5; Document 36, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 98. *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996 gives the date of this appeal for March 3, but Petrogradskii Sovet 1991 takes the view that it was most likely issued on 4 March.

76 Document 42, *Prikaz No. 2, Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 105–6; "Prikaz No. 2," Petro-

How to Control of Weapons in the Insurgents' Hands?

Directly related to the problem of militia and the soldiers' question and equally important in the context of the problem of power is the issue of weapon control. During the insurrection of 27 February the soldiers went to the streets, emptying regimental arsenals. The insurgents acquired more weapons after they occupied the Arsenal, weapon and cartridge factories, and police stations. According to I.I. Mints, weapons captured by insurgents from the Arsenal alone numbered 40,000 rifles and 30,000 revolvers, not to mention the weapons taken from the various regimental armories. More than 2,000 shells and 2,000,000 cartridges fell into the hands of the masses. In addition, workers of the Sestroretsk Weapon Factory handed most of the weapons they had captured from the factory stock to the insurgents in Petrograd, which included 1,247 rifles, 48 sporting guns, 64 revolvers, and 100,000 cartridges. Moreover, despite opposition from the Duma Committee as well as from the Soviet Executive Committee, the Military Commission was compelled to surrender to the insurgents the weapons that came under its control. Zlokazov states that the Military Commission gave the workers 24,000 rifles and 400,000 cartridges between 2 and 4 March.⁷⁷ Undoubtedly many weapons fell into the hands of irresponsible citizens, and even criminals, thus creating a public menace. The Duma Committee, the Petrograd Soviet, and the insurgents differed in their approaches to dealing with the problem of weapon control.

The Duma Committee felt that the greatest danger lay not in the possession of weapons by a small group of irresponsible citizens and criminals, but in the arming of the masses of insurgents in the streets.⁷⁸ In its opinion, only a few authorised institutions – the Military Commission and the City Militia – should possess weapons. The Duma Committee therefore consciously treated this problem as a part of the question of power. The successful removal of weapons from the hands of the insurgents would assure the creation of a stable government strong enough to steer its course without yielding too much to popular pressure. Thus, as soon as the Duma Committee took over the Military Commission, it quickly took measures to protect military supply depots

grad Sovet 1991, pp. 156–57. Document 42 in *Fevreal'skaia revoliutsiia 1996* is taken from the RGVIA (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii arkhiv), and dated 5 March. The appendix of Petrograd Soviet 1991 is taken from *Den'* 7 March 1917. The editor of Petrograd Sovet 1991 takes the view that Order No. 2 was adopted only on 6 March.

77 Mints 1967, vol. 1, p. 538; Tsybul'skii 1957, p. 144; Zlokazov 1969, p. 55.

78 For a detailed discussion of the problem of weapon control, see Hasegawa 1973, pp. 317–21.

and munitions factories from the insurgents.⁷⁹ Rodzianko's order did not specifically mention confiscation of weapons from the soldiers, but the restoration of order and discipline that it intended to achieve clearly implied this, and the soldiers understood Rodzianko's order to lead to such a conclusion. As we have already seen, Rodzianko's order angered the insurgents. Met with a strong protest from the Executive Committee as well as from the insurgents, Engel'gardt had to declare that officers who attempted to confiscate weapons from soldiers would be executed. During the discussion on 1 March the soldiers' delegates unanimously decided that no weapons should be surrendered to officers under any circumstances, and ultimately their decision was incorporated into one part of Order No. 1, which stated that weapons should be controlled by the soldiers' committees.

On 1 March the head of the City Militia, Kryzhanovskii, issued a proclamation appealing to citizens to voluntarily surrender weapons to the City Militia.⁸⁰ Unlike Rodzianko's order, this was an appeal for cooperation and did not imply any punitive action. Only a small number of citizens responded; most simply ignored it. The City Militia acquired by voluntary surrender only 108 rifles and 307 revolvers and pistols. Compared with the enormous number of weapons that had fallen into insurgent hands, these figures represented no more than a drop in a bucket. Of the 300 persons who surrendered their weapons, 223 did so in the central districts of the city (Admiralty, Spasskii, Kazan, Liteinyi and Kolomenskii), while only fifteen persons in the Petrograd District and seven persons in the Vyborg District responded to Kryzhanovskii's appeal.⁸¹ Thus it was apparent by 1 March that attempts by the Duma Committee and the City Militia to confiscate weapons from the masses had failed. They realised that without antagonising them to the extent that a military showdown would be inevitable, they could not disarm the population at large. Having burned their fingers, they now proceeded to reach a *modus vivendi* with the workers' militia and ultimately with the Soviet Executive Committee in the hope that the Soviet leaders would accomplish what they were unable to do.

How, then, did the Executive Committee react to this conflict? On 28 February, when delegates of the workers' militia in the Vyborg District approached the Executive Committee with a request for weapons, they met a flat rejection on the grounds that the Military Commission itself did not possess sufficient

79 See Chapter 19.

80 'Prikaz nachal'nika gorodskoi militsii: D.A. Kryzhanovskii', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, No. 7, 3 March 1917, p. 1.

81 Startsev 1965, pp. 50–1.

weapons.⁸² In the official proclamation published in *Izvestiia* on 1 March, the Executive Committee appealed to the insurgents to surrender weapons to the 'commissars appointed by the Soviet' in various districts or to the Executive Committee in the Tauride Palace.⁸³ Yet the Executive Committee did not go so far as to demand the transfer of weapons to the Military Commission or the City Militia, since it could not dispel its fear that the 'bourgeoisie' might turn the weapons against the revolution. Hence, on this issue as well, the Executive Committee took the middle road; while maintaining that individual insurgents should surrender their arms, it nevertheless advocated control of weapons by the Soviet or by the commissars appointed by the Soviet. But attempts by the Duma Committee and the City Militia as well as the Executive Committee to dispossess the masses of their weapons were frustrated by the workers' stubborn resistance. Both the Petrograd Soviet and the City Militia soon began to yield to the persistent pressure of the workers' militia for more weapons.⁸⁴

An inherent weakness of the Duma Committee and the City Militia was clearly revealed by their failure to carry through on their original intention of disarming the people. Only one measure could have accomplished this goal – a military showdown. But neither the Duma Committee nor the City Militia was prepared to take this risk. Once they abandoned their original policy, their only choice was to accept the existence of the workers' militia and the soldiers' committees, hoping to exert some control over them, if not to overpower them. This policy, however, left the Duma Committee and the City Militia wide open to popular pressure. The Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet also advocated seizure of weapons from insurgents, although it refused to support the bid of the Duma Committee and the City Militia for the exclusive right to control weapons. This position was consistent with the Executive Committee's implicit assumption that a provisional government should be formed from the 'bourgeoisie' without the participation of the 'proletariat'. Yet its actions were motivated not only by its desire to help the 'bourgeois' forces organise a new government but also by its fear that popular pressure might push it to seize power – a course that it was not capable of pursuing and had no intention of following.

82 Zlokazov 1966, p. 52.

83 'Obrashchenie Soveta rabochikh deputatov k rabochim s prizyvom sdavat' oruzhie Sovetu i raiononnym komissaram', *Izvestiia Petrogradskikh Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, No. 2, 1 March 1917, p. 3; Petrogradskii Soviet 1991, p. 43.

84 Hasegawa 1975, pp. 320–1.

The Soviet Executive Committee and the Problem of Power

An examination of the Executive Committee's attitude toward the conflict of police power between the City Militia and the workers' militia, toward the soldiers question, and toward the problem of weapon control, reveals two interesting points. First, despite the overwhelming support of the insurgents, whose self-governing forces in the workers' militia and the soldiers' committees would have served as a nucleus of the incipient Soviet power, if it were willing to assume power, the Executive Committee leaders not only had no intention of seizing power, but also helped its rival organisation, the Duma Committee, to increase its strength even to the point of endangering its own power base. Its willingness to cooperate with the Duma Committee was so persistent that it can be safely concluded that the Executive Committee even feared the spontaneous popular movement expressed in the formation of the workers' militia and in Order No. 1.

Secondly, while it was cooperating with the Duma Committee, the Executive Committee qualified its support by demanding the ultimate allegiance of the insurgents to the Soviet. This was partly due to the popular pressure; to have the masses accept the unpopular policy of compromise, the Executive Committee needed to assure them that it was not betraying their expectations. At the same time, the Executive Committee was well aware that the strength of the Soviet largely stemmed from the support of the masses. While it was anxious to see a 'bourgeois' social order established, it was not interested in diminishing its strength and losing its effectiveness as a pressure group.

Hence the Executive Committee took a contradictory position. On the other hand, it lent its support to the Duma Committee to smooth the way for the latter to form a stable government, but on the other hand it jealously guarded its ultimate claim to the allegiance of the insurgents. But on this issue there was no unanimity among the leading members of the Executive Committee. Although they managed to marginalise for the moment the influence from the left, represented by the left SRS, the Mezhraiontsy and the Vyborg Bolsheviks, there existed nuanced differences between Sukhanov, who emphasised the necessity of cooperating with the Duma Committee, and Sokolov, who was more interested in consolidating the power base of the Soviet – a difference that was reflected in the contradictory policies of the Executive Committee.

The analysis of the formation of the militia, the soldiers question, and the problem of weapon control leads us to important conclusions concerning the birth of dual power. The essential nature of dual power was not the conflict between the Duma Committee and the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, as it has been hitherto argued, but rather the conflict between

the authority emanating from the Duma Committee and the self-government established by the insurgents in the form of the workers' militia and the soldiers' committees. The Duma Committee, and subsequently the provisional government, suffered an inherent weakness. It could not rely on the institutional structure of the old regime, which had been greatly disrupted by revolutionary upheaval, and it also failed to establish direct connections with the masses. Decrees and proclamations were limited in their effectiveness; the naked force of coercion was unavailable. Quite in contrast, the incipient self-government of the workers and the soldiers came into existence right in the midst of the daily life of the masses, and therefore had promising revolutionary vitality and potentiality. Yet its force was extremely limited on a national scale, particularly when the attitude of the soldiers at the front still remained in question. Nor had the majority of workers and soldiers, who had established an enclave of autonomy in the capital, yet begun to translate their immediate feelings and grievances into conscious revolutionary programmes. The workers and soldiers, with a few exceptions, could not offer an alternative to the Executive Committee's policy toward the problem of power, despite the manifestation of their latent radicalism on a number of specific issues. The Duma Committee could not destroy even the incipient forces of the insurgents' self-government, since it had sought from the very beginning to attain revolutionary legitimacy. Thus, the fundamental conflict between the two powers was, peculiarly, not immediately disrupted by one side's bid to devour the other. The Soviet Executive Committee's policy provided a crucial clue to the temporary stalemate in this conflict. Refusing to strive for the seizure of power by relying on the overwhelming support of the insurgents in Petrograd, it willingly assisted its opponent in establishing power.

The 'Transfer' of Power

The Executive Committee Discusses the Problem of Power

By 1 March the insurgents were beginning to establish their own self-government organisations in factories, working class districts and military units. It seemed almost a logical step from this for the insurgents, who now came to rally solidly behind the Petrograd Soviet, to demand that the Petrograd Soviet should seize power in opposition to the Duma Committee. A small group of the radical left, especially the Mezhraiontsy and left SRS, had already demanded that the Soviet should become a provisional revolutionary government. The leaders of the Executive Committee, sensing the danger of drifting away, under popular pressure, to an undesirable destination, desperately tried to adhere to their original plan. They chose to appeal directly to the Duma Committee to form a provisional government immediately. Thus, the historic negotiations conducted in the small hours of 2 March were less like a hard-fought bargaining than an anointment of a provisional government by the leaders of the Soviet Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee, which had thus far avoided a discussion of the problem of power, was forced to make a decision on this matter on 1 March. By then three different opinions had developed within the Executive Committee. The right wing, represented by the Bund and the Popular Socialists and joined by some Mensheviks and the right SRS, advocated the formation of a coalition government composed of the members of the Duma Committee and of the Soviet Executive Committee. The left wing, represented by the Bolsheviks, the Mezhraiontsy, and the left SRS, rejecting cooperation with the 'bourgeois' Duma Committee, called for the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government, although they differed on how this government should be created. Faced with these two extremes, the majority of the Executive Committee members took the middle road, advocating the creation of a provisional government by the 'bourgeoisie', without allowing 'revolutionary democracy', as the socialists gathering in the Executive Committee called themselves, to participate in the government.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of 1 March the Executive Committee for the first time discussed the problem of power, while excited Soviet delegates began to gather in the next room, Room 13, to debate the soldiers' question at the third general session. This was the first time that various factions within the Soviet

faced each other on a major issue. The meeting, which had begun amicably, quickly became tense with the sharp exchange of opinions. Chkheidze, 'unnecessarily excited and threatening with an ultimatum', argued against the participation of the socialists in a provisional government. The right wing presented its demand for a coalition government. Their argument, however, was not particularly effective, since its strongest advocates, Bogdanov and Peshekhonov, absented themselves for other engagements. The centre of the discussion thus shifted to the '*conditions of the transfer of power to the Provisional Government which was being formed by the Duma Committee*' (emphasis in original). Despite the presence of Shliapnikov, Molotov, and Zalutskii, the Executive Committee took it for granted that the provisional government would be formed by the Duma Committee.¹ In the meantime, the delegates in the assembly hall became restless as they waited for the opening of the general session past the scheduled time. Unable to reach a conclusion, the Executive Committee sent Skobelev to Room 13 to delay opening the session. Further interrupted by new business that required immediate decisions, the Executive Committee finally postponed discussion of the problem of power until that evening.

The evening session of the Executive Committee, which began at six o'clock, was attended by almost all its members. In the middle of the meeting the soldiers' deputies, who had just been elected to represent the Petrograd Garrison in the Executive Committee, also participated in the discussion. The agenda was set as follows: (1) character and class composition of the first revolutionary government; (2) demands to be presented to this government; and (3) composition of the cabinet.² The right wing attacked the majority opinion with increased force, pleading the case for the establishment of a coalition government. Bund leader Rafes and Ehrlich strongly argued for the formation of the coalition government so that the working class would be able to influence the direction of the revolutionary government.³ In contrast to the offensive from the right, the left-wing members of the Executive Committee remained curiously silent, without presenting their demand for the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government. At the end of a heated discussion, the following motion, moved by the majority, passed by thirteen to eight: 'We should not send representatives of democracy to the ministry of Miliukov and should not demand participation therein'.⁴

1 Sukhanov 1922, p. 241. See Melancon 2009, p. 44.

2 Sukhanov 1922, p. 255.

3 Rafes 1922, p. 194.

4 Sukhanov 1922, pp. 255–6; Zenzinov 1953, p. 20. According to Skobelev the vote was nine to

The discussion moved to the next topic – what conditions to impose on the provisional government. Sukhanov argued that the most urgent task of the Soviet was to compel the 'bourgeoisie' to take power, not to undermine their authority. Thus the conditions should be restricted to the absolute minimum lest they should disrupt the accord between the Duma Committee and the Soviet. Then he presented three such conditions: guarantees of political freedom, amnesty and the convocation of a constituent assembly.⁵

Sukhanov's proposal was accepted in general terms, but further elaborated upon and supplemented. Again, the left wing did not raise objections; in fact, the decision was reached in a surprisingly short time. The conditions finally agreed upon consisted of nine points: (1) complete and immediate amnesty for all political and religious prisoners; (2) freedom of expression, publication, unions, meetings and strikes; (3) immediate introduction of a democratic republic; (4) immediate measures for the convocation of a constituent assembly on the basis of universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage; (5) replacement of the police by a people's militia; (6) election to organs of local administration, also on the basis of four-tailed suffrage; (7) abolition of all organisations

six. Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 185. According to Shliapnikov, the Bolsheviks and other left-wing members of the Executive Committee proposed to 'take the administrative affairs of the country into the hands of the revolutionary democracy by means of selecting a provisional revolutionary government from the composition of the majority of the Soviet'. In his opinion, the discussion of the Executive Committee centred around whether the Soviet should approve the provisional government composed by the Duma Committee, while the major opponents in the debate were the left wing, on the one hand, and the united front of the right wing and the centre on the other. He further states that 'only eight members stood for revolutionary democracy'. Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 216–17. Many Soviet historians, citing Shliapnikov, argue that the Bolsheviks stood for a provisional revolutionary government created from the Petrograd Soviet. For instance, see Burdzhakov 1967, p. 314. This account contradicts other evidence given by Sukhanov, Rafes and Zenzinov. It is true that the Bolsheviks had called for the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government in the manifesto issued on 27–8 February, but this was presented not as an urgent, practical solution to the problem of power, but as a doctrinal statement of their position. Shliapnikov himself admits that the Bolsheviks shared with the Mensheviks the belief that the revolution was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 220. Further, according to Tarasov-Rodionov, Shliapnikov supported the formation of the provisional government as a matter of fact and stated that from an objective point of view the Duma was helping the workers destroy tsarist power. Tarasov-Rodionov 1931, p. 214. It seems safe to assume that Shliapnikov's account is not accurate and that the left socialists did not object to the position of the majority at the Executive Committee meeting on 1 March. It is unlikely that Iurenev and Aleksandrovoch attended the meeting.

5 Sukhanov 1922, pp. 232–5.

that were discriminatory on the basis of class, religion and nationalities; (8) construction of the army on the basis of self-government, including the election of the commanding officers; and (9) no disarmament and no withdrawal from Petrograd of the army units that took part in the revolutionary movement.⁶ The seventh condition was added at the insistence of the Bund leaders.

Most of the demands were quite moderate, as Sukhanov argued that they should be. The demands for amnesty, guarantees of basic freedoms, election of local administration and abolition of all discriminatory organisations, were more or less identical with those of the Progressive Bloc. The Duma Committee would easily accept the demands for a constituent assembly and the replacement of the police by a people's militia, since the former had been one of the dearest demands of the liberals, and the tsarist police were also repugnant to the leaders of the Duma Committee, who had, in fact, taken the first step toward their replacement in Petrograd without pressure from the left. However, point three, the establishment of a republican form of government, could cause difficulty, since the Duma Committee by this time had adopted the policy to seek Nicholas's abdication for his son, Aleksei, under Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksnadovich's regency, namely, the continuation of the monarchical system, though a constitutional monarchy. Also points eight and nine, the demands for soldiers' rights, radically departed from an otherwise inoffensive list of demands. Obviously it was the soldiers' representatives, fresh from drafting Order No. 1, that injected this radicalism into the Executive Committee's demands. Their argument apparently troubled the majority leaders of the Executive Committee, who tried to keep the demands minimal and acceptable to the Duma Committee. Sukhanov complained:

Now all this group, which had suddenly appeared from behind the curtains and filled the small room of the Executive Committee, of course,

6 No minutes were taken for this meeting so it is not certain how the final form of conditions was drafted. The above list is reconstructed from the accounts of Sukhanov 1923, pp. 56–60; 'Ot Ispolnitel'nogo komiteta Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov', *Izvestiia Petgradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, No. 4, 3 March 1917, p. 1; Rafes 1922, p. 220; Tokarev 1976, p. 89. Sukhanov does not mention the seventh condition, while *Izvestiia* omits the third. The conditions published in *Izvestiia* were those that the provisional government had agreed upon as a result of the negotiations on the transfer of power. Tokarev uses the minutes of the general session of the Soviet on 2 March, in which Steklov outlined the process of the negotiations.

could not join in the course of already begun deliberations, and, trying actively to participate in the discussions, they only hindered the work.⁷

As for the last item of the agenda, the composition of the cabinet of the provisional government, the Executive Committee quickly decided not to interfere in the selection of its members.⁸

The Executive Committee thus came to adopt a contradictory position. While it decided to let the bourgeoisie form a provisional government and even not to interfere in the selection of the cabinet, it wrote a platform for this government. The provisional government should perform in accordance with the scenario supplied to it, while the Soviet should function as a director, who, not wishing to act, was interested nevertheless in monitoring every move taken by its actors. According to Rafes, however, this decision was not final. The Executive Committee considered the resolutions adopted at this meeting temporary, to be ratified by the Soviet general session on 2 March. Before the general session another Executive Committee meeting would be held, where representatives of each party would present the result of the deliberations of their parties.⁹ The majority leaders might have given this promise to assuage the right-wing opposition, but fulfilment of this promise was virtually impossible, since open discussion of the negotiating terms in the general session was impractical and rife with the danger of being overturned, though satisfying to democratic principles.

The Duma Committee and the Executive Committee Negotiate

The Bolshevik Vyborg District Committee convened its first legal meeting on 1 March in the building of the Sampsonievskii Brotherhood. K. Shutko made a passionate appeal for the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government and a proclamation designating the Petrograd Soviet as the provisional revolutionary government.¹⁰ This resolution, circulated among the workers in the Vyborg District, presented an alternative to the Executive Committee's policy of compromise. It had, admittedly, only a small number of followers and

7 Sukhanov 1922, p. 255.

8 Ibid., pp. 260–1.

9 Rafes 1922, p. 220.

10 *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie* 1957, p. 6; Dingel'stadt 1925, p. 193.

its influence was restricted to the most politically conscious elements of the working class. Yet in view of the upsurge of the revolutionary temper precipitated by Rodzianko's order, it was like a time bomb in a powder keg.

It was therefore not surprising that the negotiations between the Duma Committee and the Soviet Executive Committee started on the latter's initiative.¹¹ Ignoring the understanding agreed upon at the last Executive Committee meeting, Sukhanov went to the right wing of the Tauride Palace 'at his own responsibility and risk' to arrange a meeting with the Duma Committee. He first approached Kerenskii, but the Vice-Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet and a member of the Duma Committee refused to relay Sukhanov's offer to his colleagues of the Duma Committee. Why Kerenskii was indifferent to the crucial matter of transfer of power is not clear, but it is likely that given the Executive Committee's decision prohibiting him to enter the provisional government, and his secret intention to defy this decision, he had decided not to play any role in the negotiations. Sukhanov then went directly to the lion's den and announced to Nekrasov the Executive Committee's proposal to negotiate with the Duma Committee on the matter of power.¹² Half an hour later, Nekrasov, returning from consultation with his colleagues, told Sukhanov that the Duma Committee and the candidates for the provisional government would meet with the representatives of the Soviet at midnight. From the Duma Committee's point of view, it was necessary to ensure the Executive Committee's full support for the provisional government so as to obtain the allegiance of the insurgent masses in Petrograd; thus, Sukhanov's offer was more than welcome. Using lack of time as an excuse, Chkheidze, Sukhanov, Steklov and Sokolov delegated themselves to participate in the negotiations without formal authorisation and in violation of the agreement reached at the last Executive Committee meeting.¹³

11 According to Shliapnikov, the Duma Committee's official proposal for negotiations preceded the Executive Committee's discussions on the problem of power. Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 216. Shul'gin also states that the negotiations originated from the Duma Committee's offer to the Executive Committee. Shul'gin 1925, p. 228. But the two main figures in the negotiations, Sukhanov and Miliukov, state that the Executive Committee had made the first move.

12 Considering Kerenskii's close relations with Nekrasov, it may well be that it was Kerenskii who sent Sukhanov to Nekrasov.

13 Sukhanov 1922, pp. 271–2. According to the record of the Duma Committee, the Soviet delegates were only Steklov, Sokolov, and Sukhanov. 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1966, p. 130.

The negotiations began at midnight in the headquarters of the Duma Committee. From the Duma Committee and the provisional government, Rodzianko, Miliukov, Nekrasov, Prince G.E. L'vov, Godnev, Adzhemov, Shidlovskii, V. L'vov, Shul'gin and Kerenskii were present. Most of the participants from the Duma Committee remained silent during the negotiations. Rodzianko, now crushed by the eclipse of his personal influence, yet still occupying the largest table at the head of the room, kept himself busy drinking soda, and otherwise restricted himself to a few irrelevant comments. The future prime minister, Prince L'vov, sat impassively, without uttering a word. Kerenskii, too, despite his proclivity to theatrics, remained curiously indifferent to the negotiations, as if immersed in melancholy reflection. Only Miliukov actively participated in the whole process, busily taking notes, asking questions, and retorting to the remarks of the Executive Committee representatives.

Rodzianko, Nekrasov and Miliukov complained about the worsening anarchy in the capital and pleaded for the cooperation of the Petrograd Soviet in restoring order. Seizing this moment, Sukhanov emphasised the necessity of establishing the provisional government immediately. He declared:

The Provisional Committee of the State Duma, which has taken the executive power into its hand, is not a *government*, not even a 'provisional' government. It is necessary to create this government and on this account there undoubtedly exist definite intentions and plans on the part of the leading group of the State Duma. The Soviet of Workers' Deputies supports on its part the privileged elements to form a provisional government, considering that it follows from the general situation at hand and corresponds to the interests of the revolution. However, as the organisational and the ideological centre of the popular movement, as the only organ capable at present of keeping this movement within limits and of directing it into certain channels, and as the only organ which has the real force at its disposal in the capital, it wishes to speak on its relations to the government formed in the right wing, explain how it sees its tasks, and in order to avoid complications, to state the demands that it presents to the government created by the revolution in the name of all democrats.¹⁴

After Sukhanov's speech, Steklov read the demands from a slip of paper, and explained each point as if he were giving a popular lecture in a workers' circle. As Steklov explained the Executive Committee's demands, Sukhanov observed

14 Ibid., pp. 274–5.

the anxiety on the faces of the Duma Committee leaders, but 'Nekrasov kept completely calm and on the face of Miliukov one could even catch signs of complete satisfaction'.¹⁵

Miliukov responded to the Executive Committee's demands. Most of the conditions were completely acceptable, he stated, since they had been included already in the programme of the provisional government. Nevertheless, Miliukov had to raise objections on two points, first concerning the future form of the political system, and secondly concerning soldiers' rights.¹⁶ Rejecting the Executive Committee's demand for the introduction of the republican form of government, Miliukov argued that the question of the future form of government could be determined by the Russian people alone. Until the constituent assembly freely elected by the people expressed its opinion on this matter, neither the Executive Committee nor the Duma Committee should impose a republican or monarchical form of government on the nation. The immediate introduction of the republican form of government would mean the beginning of a new Time of Troubles. Therefore, in the transitional period until the convocation of the constituent assembly, the preservation of the monarchy in the form of the new tsar, Aleksei, under the regency of Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, was necessary. According to Steklov, Miliukov stated that this position was final, and that without agreement on this point, there would be no agreement at all.¹⁷

Chkheidze and Sokolov objected, and tried to convince the Duma Committee members of the absurdity of their position in view of the total loss of prestige of the Romanov dynasty and the monarchical system in general in the eyes of the people. But Miliukov did not change his opinion. While monarchists such as Rodzianko and Shul'gin remained silent, Miliukov's militant stand on this issue surprised the Executive Committee's delegates. The Kadet leader was keenly aware of the powerlessness of a provisional government with no legal or institutional foundations to rely on. For this reason he was vitally interested in establishing a constitutional monarchy before any discussions of the future form of the political system could take place. To persuade the Executive Committee delegates to accept this position, Miliukov even went as far as to say that 'one is a sick child, the other is a thoroughly stupid man'.¹⁸

Although the Soviet delegates could not accept the preservation of the monarchy as a matter of principle, they were prepared to drop point three

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 278.

¹⁶ Miliukov 1955, p. 306.

¹⁷ Tokarev 1976, p. 92; Miliukov 1978, p. 31.

¹⁸ Cartledge 1956, p. 39; Sukhanov 1922, vol. 1, p. 279.

from their demands. Until 1 March the idea of the abolition of the monarchy was considered too radical. Sukhanov even told Zenzinov privately that the candidacy of Mikhail as regent would be favourable 'to the future struggle for democracy'.¹⁹ As long as the Duma Committee and the provisional government pursued their policy toward the monarchy independently, without implicating the Soviet, they saw nothing wrong with its result. They thus agreed to leave the future form of government undecided, and the Duma Committee would not be required to accept point three.

Miliukov raised another objection concerning the soldiers' rights. Having learned a lesson from the violent reaction caused by Rodzianko's order, Miliukov had to swallow point eight, which promised to take no measure to disarm or withdraw from the capital any units that had taken part in the revolution. He argued, however, that to give soldiers full civil and political rights would be tantamount to destruction of the armed forces. Above all, he objected to the demand of the election of the officers. After some exchange of opinions, Miliukov accepted the demand for soldiers' civil rights 'within the limitation permitted by military-technical conditions', while the Soviet representatives dropped the demand for the election of officers.²⁰

From the Duma Committee's record, however, the issue of the rights of soldiers was raised not merely with respect to the narrow question of the election of officers, but in relation to the broader issue of Order No. 1. The issue of election of officers was not actually included in the final version of Order No. 1, but the fact that the demand for election of officers was included in the Executive Committee's demand gives credence to Tokarev's argument that the original draft of Order No. 1 may have included this demand.²¹ But more importantly, some Duma Committee members strongly objected to the provision in Order No. 1, according to which the soldiers were to pledge allegiance to the Petrograd Soviet and fulfil the decisions of the Duma Committee only when they were not in conflict with the decisions of the Petrograd Soviet. That was the most important point of Order No. 1, more important than the alleged principle of election of officers, as at least some members of the Duma Committee grasped it. There is no reason to believe that the usually perceptive Miliukov did not understand it. It is possible to interpret that he did not raise this issue and decided to dwell on the issue of election of officers for two reasons. First, he knew that the principle of officers' election would raise a red flag among

19 Zaslavskii and Kantorovich 1924, pp. 43–4; Zenzinov 1953, p. 226.

20 Sukhanov 1922, p. 279; Miliukov 1955, p. 307; Miliukov 1978, p. 31; Shul'gin, 1925, p. 231; Tokarev 1976, pp. 64–5, 93.

21 Tokarev 1976, pp. 64–5.

the military leaders. Thus he wanted to remove it before provoking the bull to charge against the revolution. But, secondly, he was anxious to gain the support of the Executive Committee for the establishment of the Provisional Government, which was the only means to gain its legitimacy among the insurgents.

Shul'gin did not entertain such diplomatic subtlety and decided to call a spade a spade, and blurted out:

If you feel you have power behind you, if you can govern Russia, if you consent to carry out upon yourself this terrifying [*strashnaia*] responsibility, then remove us, arrest the Provisional Committee, arrest the State Duma, form the government, and govern by yourselves. But if you do not have this boldness and desire, then don't meddle with those who, somehow [*kak-nikak*], have the courage to take upon their shoulders this burden of governing Russia at such time.²²

The Soviet leaders answered that they had no intention to arrest the Duma Committee or the Duma members. But Shul'gin exposed the bare reality of the power relations between the Duma Committee/Provisional Government, the Petrograd Soviet leaders, and the insurgent masses that Miliukov and Sukhanov had managed to conceal by playing a diplomatic game.

At this moment, however, a group of visibly upset officers appeared and called Shul'gin outside. They talked for a long time. The officers argued that the principle of electing officers had already been implemented in Petrograd and that this could not be undone. The officers appeared to have managed to convince Shul'gin that the opposition to the principle of officers' election or Order No. 1 would lead to more bloodshed against the officers. We do not know who these officers were, but it is possible to speculate that these officers were sent by the Military Commission, anxious to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Executive Committee. Shul'gin returned to the meeting. After a long discussion, the Soviet leaders agreed to issue a second order softening the impact of Order No. 1. For their part, they were anxious to see the formation of the provisional government, and place the cup of governing Russia in the hands of the bourgeoisie.²³

Although the Executive Committee purposely excluded any demand concerning the war, Sokolov pointed out that he had heard a rumour that the new chairman of the Military Commission, Guchkov, was preparing a proclamation

²² 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 130–1.

²³ 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 132.

to the army with the appeal to fight the war to the victorious end. The Soviet representatives expressed their fear that such a proclamation would cause difficulty in the Executive Committee in its attempt to convince the masses of the necessity to reach an agreement with the Duma Committee. Sukhanov requested that such a proclamation should be stopped, and the Duma Committee, not interested in a confrontation with the Soviet, readily agreed.²⁴

When the arguments on the conditions were exhausted, Sukhanov pleaded for complete acceptance of the Executive Committee's demands as modified by the Duma Committee as the programme of the provisional government. He stated his reasons:

Among the masses, with every day and hour, an incomparably broader program was developing, which the masses were following and would follow. The leaders were straining all their energies to direct the movement into a definite channel, and keep it within reasonable limits. But if these limits were, under the complicated circumstances, to be settled imprudently and not in accordance with the swing of the movement, then spontaneous energy would sweep them away together with all the designed governmental 'unity'. Either we could stop this spontaneous energy or nobody could. The real power therefore was either ours or nobody's. Only one conclusion is possible: to agree to our conditions and accept them as the governmental program.²⁵

There was actually no need for Sukhanov to make this plea, for the Duma Committee members, who had expected tougher negotiating terms from the socialists, encompassing demands on socioeconomic problems and foreign policy, found them moderate enough to accept easily.

The Duma Committee's Demands and the Final Agreement

After the discussion of the Executive Committee's conditions, Miliukov presented the Duma Committee's demands: (1) the Executive Committee should immediately take action to restore peace and order, and, in particular, to establish contact between soldiers and officers; and (2) the Executive Committee must proclaim that the provisional government was formed as a result of the

²⁴ Tokarev 1976, p. 93.

²⁵ Sukhanov 1923, p. 281.

agreement between the Duma Committee and the Soviet Executive Committee and that this government should be recognised as the sole legitimate government by the citizens. He also demanded that the declaration of the Soviet to that effect should be printed side by side with the government's proclamation. From Miliukov's point of view, this was precisely the purpose of the negotiations. The Duma Committee sought to reach an agreement with the Executive Committee to channel the support of the masses for the new government – a goal that all the attempts of the Duma Committee had so far failed to attain – by using the authority of the Petrograd Soviet.²⁶ The parent bodies of the provisional government were both the Duma Committee and the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, and the provisional government was formed not solely from the Duma Committee. The Executive Committee representatives accepted these two demands readily. Having achieved his goal, Miliukov 'did not even think of concealing his satisfaction and pleasant surprise'. The meeting adjourned at three o'clock in the morning, satisfying all its participants.

Two hours later, Miliukov, Sokolov and Sukhanov met again to reach the final agreement on the text of the proclamation. As for the Soviet's point three, they agreed that 'they abstain from all activities that might determine the form of the future political system'. According to Sukhanov this was a 'middle-way compromise decision' to solve the contradiction between two diametrically opposing views by shelving the matter temporarily until the convocation of a constituent assembly.²⁷ This was a tacit agreement that the Executive Committee would allow the preservation of the monarchy. The draft proposal Sokolov had prepared, however, satisfied neither Miliukov nor Sukhanov. Miliukov rewrote the entire draft of the Soviet's proclamation, which was accepted by the Soviet representatives with minor changes. His version appealed to the people to restore order and to avoid anarchy for the consolidation of the revolution. Miliukov writes: 'This is almost the same thing that I had been telling the

26 Ibid., pp. 281–3. Schapiro states that the Duma Committee's acceptance of the Executive Committee's demands 'predetermined the impotence of the government and laid the foundations for future anarchy'. Schapiro 1967, p. 103. One must realise, however, that most of the conditions would have been included in the programmes of the Provisional Government without any pressure from the Soviet. The agreement with the Soviet was precisely the measure by which the Duma Committee hoped to bolster the strength of the new government and to prevent further anarchy. The failure of this policy did not stem from its acceptance of the conditions, but from the more fundamental political relations at the time. Schapiro 1967, p. 103.

27 Sukhanov 1922, pp. 258–9, 283.

soldiers from the platform of the regiment barracks. And it was accepted for publication in the name of the Soviet!' His jubilation, however, was premature, as the events on the following day destroyed the fragile agreement that Miliukov and the Duma deputies had thought they had succeeded in reaching.²⁸

28 Miliukov 1955, p. 308; Miliukov 1978, pp. 31–2. Also see Sukhanov 1922, p. 298; Miliukov 1921, vol. 1, p. 4. Also see Startsev 2005b for the negotiations between the Executive Committee and the Duma Committee, Startsev 2005b, pp. 202–8.

PART 5

The Abdication of Nicholas II



Nicholas II and the Revolution

Nicholas Receives the News of the Revolution

Tsar Nicholas left Tsarskoe Selo on 22 February to resume his duties at the front as supreme commander in chief, and arrived in Mogilev on the next day.¹ The intolerable loneliness resulting from his separation from his family overwhelmed Nicholas in the Stavka, although he felt a sense of relief in being emancipated from the burdens of political problems in the capital and in being able to resume a quiet, secluded life. He wrote in one of his letters to Alexandra:

My brain takes rest here – no ministers, no troublesome problems requiring my attention. I think this is good for me, but only for my brain. My heart aches from the separation. I hate this separation, particularly at such a time! I shall not stay here for long.²

His life in the Stavka went uneventfully, as he resumed his routine schedule, methodically dividing his time between ceremonious teas and suppers, holding audiences to hear formal reports, daily outings and games of dominos. One member of his entourage, A. Mordvinov, noted that ‘One day after another passed like two drops of water’.³

During the first few days after his arrival in Mogilev, Nicholas’s mind was mainly preoccupied with his concern for his children, who, he learned after his arrival, had been stricken with measles. The condition of the sick children was reported in detail in the empress’s daily letters to her husband. Among the minutiae of family affairs, however, there soon appeared a discordant commentary on what was happening outside their family. In a letter dated 24 February, Alexandra noted the disturbances in Petrograd, and urged Nicholas to ‘expel Kedrenskii [Kerenskii] from the Duma because of his dreadful speech – this is necessary (military law in wartime) and will set an example’. On the next day she wrote:

1 Protopopov attempted to dissuade Nicholas from leaving Tsarskoe Selo at the time of this delicate political situation. Kulikov 2014b, p. 344, citing Protopopov 1926, pp. 191–2.

2 Perepiska 1923, pp. 207–8.

3 Mordvinov 1923, p. 86. For Nicholas’s daily schedule see A. Tal’ (Hoover), pp. 4–5.

This is a hooligan movement: little urchins are running and shouting that they have no bread, simply to create confusion. Workers are hampering others from working. If the weather were very cold, probably they all would stay home. But this will be all over and will calm down if only the Duma behaves itself well. They are printing the worst speeches, and I think that those anti-dynastic speeches should be *immediately* and very severely punished, all the more so since it is now a time of war.

She further suggested that the strikers should be punished by deportation to the front.⁴

By 25 February the news of labour unrest in Petrograd had reached the Stavka from other sources. The palace commandant, General V.N. Voeikov, received reports from Protopopov and the director of the palace police, Colonel Geradi. The entourage began discussing the disturbing news. On this day Nicholas reacted to the crisis by issuing an order to Khabalov to stop the unrest by the next day. Nicholas's letters, telegrams and diary do not explain his thinking behind this decision, since absolutely nothing is mentioned about the political situation in Petrograd. Nor is there any evidence to indicate that he consulted anyone in reaching this decision. It appears likely that he took this step with light-heartedness, without seriously deliberating its consequences.

On 26 February, prompted by his order, the troops began their offensive against the demonstrators. All the reports that reached the Stavka indicated an improving situation in Petrograd. Alexandra noted that the government had taken 'rigorous measures', including the arrest of the ringleaders of the movement, and predicted that everything would return to normal by the next day. As if this optimism had relieved his concern, Nicholas broke his silence and for the first time commented on the crisis in Petrograd in his letter to his wife: 'I hope that Khabalov can immediately halt these street disorders. Protopopov must give him clear and definite instructions. I only hope that old Golitsyn will not lose his head'.⁵ In this optimistic atmosphere, Rodzianko's telegram to the tsar, which emphasised the danger of the spontaneous mass movement and the powerlessness of the government, struck Nicholas as being strange. Accustomed to Rodzianko's alarmism in the past, he immediately dismissed his recommendation to grant a ministry of confidence and told Count Frederiks: 'That fat Rodzianko wrote to me all kinds of nonsense, to which I will not even

4 Perepiska 1923, pp. 207–9; Document 73, *Fevral'skaia revliutsiia* 1996, pp. 203–4.

5 Ibid., pp. 209, 212.

reply'.⁶ Despite the flippancy of the statement, given the political philosophy of Nicholas, his reaction to Rodzianko's telegram was understandable. If he had found it unnecessary to grant political concessions in the past, there was no reason why Nicholas should have suddenly changed his policy on the basis of Rodzianko's distorted information, which contradicted all other reports he had received.

Rodzianko not only appealed directly to the tsar to grant a ministry of confidence, but also attempted to convince the high command to prevail upon Nicholas to make this desired political move. Only two generals, Brusilov and Ruzskii, responded favourably to Rodzianko's telegrams. Brusilov wrote to Alekseev, 'In view of the approaching storm of the times I do not see any other alternative'.⁷ General Ruzskii sent his telegram directly to the tsar, and urged him to consider the 'adoption of urgent measures, which could appease the population and instil in them confidence, courage, and faith in themselves and their future'. He concluded, 'Under existing circumstances repressive measures could only aggravate the situation rather than accomplish the necessary, lasting peace'.⁸ Brusilov's recommendation had no impact whatever, since Nicholas did not consider the situation in Petrograd serious enough to warrant such drastic action, while Ruzskii's advice, which reached the tsar late in the evening of 27 February, likewise fell on deaf ears. By this time Nicholas had made up his mind to solve the crisis in Petrograd by force.

The first news of the soldiers' uprising in Petrograd reached the Stavka early in the afternoon of 27 February. Khabalov's special telegram to the tsar informed the Stavka for the first time of the revolt of the Pavlovskii Regiment on 26 February and the spread of the insurrection from the Volynskii Regiment to the Lithuanian and Preobrazhenskii Regiments, and requested the immediate dispatch of reliable troops from the front. The Stavka, however, did not take the matter seriously as yet, since a telegram from Beliaev, which immediately followed Khabalov's, optimistically assured that every conceivable measure had been taken to suppress the disorder rigorously and that the government maintained complete calm.⁹ It was not until that evening, when alarming news

6 See Chapter 15.

7 *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 7.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 13. Although this telegram was sent from Pskov at 9:15 p.m. on 27 February, its contents indicate that Ruzskii had not received the news of the soldiers' insurrection in Petrograd, nor did he have any knowledge of Rodzianko's second telegram.

9 Khabalov to the tsar, no. 56, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 8; Beliaev to Alekseev, no. 196, *ibid.*

started pouring in, that the high command began to realise the magnitude of the crisis in Petrograd.

After learning of the soldiers' insurrection, Nicholas made two decisions: to send reliable troops to Petrograd to suppress the disorder and to leave the Stavka for Tsarskoe Selo on the next day. It is not known exactly how and when the first decision was made, but it appears that the appointment of General Ivanov as commander of the punitive detachment was made before seven o'clock in the evening, before the Stavka realized the seriousness of the situation in Petrograd. According to Cherniaev, the news about the abortive revolt of the Pavlovskii Regiment had a decisive influence on Nicholas's decision. At lunch, Alekseev reported about the revolt of the Pavlovskii Regiment, and after lunch, General Ivanov was summoned by the tsar.¹⁰ Nicholas wrote to his wife:

After yesterday's news from the city I see here many frightened faces. Fortunately, Alekseev is calm, but I think it is necessary to appoint a very energetic person to compel the ministers to work for the solution of such problems as food supply, railway transportation, and fuel, etc.¹¹

Nicholas also made the decision to leave Mogilev before he fully realised the seriousness of the situation in the capital. He wrote in his diary on 27 February: 'After lunch I decided to return to Tsarskoe Selo'. He informed his wife in the telegram sent at seven o'clock in the evening on 27 February that he would leave Mogilev at 2:30 in the afternoon of the following day.¹² News of the deterioration of the crisis in Petrograd, however, changed his original schedule. After ten o'clock in the evening, Voeikov received a telegram from the grand marshal of the Imperial Court, Count P.K. Benckendorff, who conveyed a message from the empress, who, on the verge of nervous exhaustion, sought her husband's advice as to the advisability of her leaving Tsarskoe Selo with her sick children

¹⁰ Cherniaev 1989, p. 165.

¹¹ *Perepiska* 1923, p. 213. The contents of the letter, which referred to the food supply and other problems as the major points at issue, strongly indicate that this letter was written before he received the news of the deterioration of the situation in Petrograd. Nicholas and Alekseev therefore made the decision to send the punitive detachment before they knew how serious the uprising in Petrograd was. Katkov's assertion that this decision was made late at night appears to be inaccurate. Katkov 1967, p. 307. Ivanov clearly stated that this appointment was made before dinner, which took place usually at seven-thirty. See Mel'gunov 1961, pp. 143–4.

¹² *Dnevnik Nikolaia Romanova* 1927, p. 137; *Perepiska* 1923, p. 213. Palace Commandant Voeikov instructed Colonel von Thal' to prepare the imperial trains so as to be able to leave by 2:30. Thal' (Hoover), p. 7.

for Mogilev. While instructing Alexandra to stay put in Tsarskoe Selo, Nicholas immediately had arrangements made for an early departure.¹³ The disturbing news of the situation in Petrograd, however, made the high command realise the risk of the tsar's trip to Tsarskoe Selo. The imperial train would hinder transportation of reinforcement troops from the front to the capital – the main concern of the high command at that moment – while Tsarskoe Selo was dangerously close to the heart of the trouble, where Nicholas might not expect to find many reliable troops. Moreover, the tsar's departure from Mogilev would inevitably create difficulties in communication between the Stavka and the emperor. But Nicholas was not in the mood to listen to Alekseev's objections. General Bazilii sarcastically remarked: 'He was first of all an excellent husband and a good father. In these moments of anguish he was anxious about his own family and desired above all to be with them'.¹⁴ No one thought his decision to leave the Stavka would eventually lead to his abdication and the end of the monarchy.

During the day and evening of 27 February Nicholas continued to receive unsolicited advice from various quarters to seek a political solution to the crisis that erupted in Petrograd. In the afternoon the tsar received another telegram from Rodzianko, which passionately requested the tsar to rescind the decree of prorogation of the Duma and to appoint a new cabinet enjoying the trust of the country.¹⁵ Not realising the seriousness of the crisis yet, Nicholas treated this telegram as a nuisance. When the news of Petrograd's paralysis reached the Stavka, Nicholas was even more firmly determined to pursue the military solution alone. At half past ten, Grand Duke Mikhail requested from Petrograd a direct telegraphic conversation with the tsar. The grand duke suggested that to bring the anarchy to an end, it would be necessary to dismiss the present ministry and to organise a new cabinet that could enjoy the trust of the emperor as well as command the respect and confidence of the nation. He then requested the tsar's permission for the issuance of a manifesto to that effect in the tsar's name, and suggested that Prince L'vov would be the most suitable candidate for the head of the future cabinet.¹⁶

13 Benckendorff 1927, p. 2; Voeikov 1936, pp. 200–1; Kulikov 2014b, p. 356.

14 Basily 1973, p. 110.

15 Rodzianko to the tsar, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, vol. 20, pp. 6–7; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 42. Alekseev, who showed this telegram to Nicholas, confided to Bazilii: 'Again I did everything possible to convince him to take the road to salvation at last. Again, I ran against a wall'. Basily 1973, p. 106.

16 Alekseev–Mikhail Aleksandrovich conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 11; Browder/Kerensky 1961, pp. 86–87. Also see Chapter 17.

To General Alekseev's reply that the tsar would leave the Stavka on the next day for Tsarskoe Selo, Mikhail said that it might be wise to delay his departure for a few days. When Nicholas received his brother's message, he refused to communicate directly with him, as Mikhail requested, and had General Alekseev convey his reply. The tsar, through Alekseev, thanked the grand duke for his 'thoughtful suggestions' but bluntly rejected them one by one. First, the tsar did not consider it possible to postpone his departure for Tsarskoe Selo. Second, concerning the dismissal of the Council of Ministers, the tsar himself would decide on this matter pending his return to the capital. Third, with regard to the suppression of the disorder in the capital, General Ivanov would be sent to Petrograd for that purpose. Fourth, on the next day reliable troops would be sent to the capital from the northern and the western fronts.¹⁷

Although General Alekseev fully endorsed Nicholas's policy for military suppression of the disorder in Petrograd, he nevertheless considered it equally important to seek a political solution acceptable to the Duma liberals. In his telegraphic conversations with Mikhail, Alekseev implied his agreement with Mikhail's recommendation and promised to urge the emperor to 'take some measures' when he reported to the tsar the next morning.¹⁸ Shortly after this conversation was over, a telegram from Golitsyn arrived, reporting to the emperor that the cabinet found itself unable to function in the face of the prevailing anarchy, and imploring the tsar to relieve the ministers of their duties and to appoint a new ministry enjoying the confidence of the nation. Despite the high fever from which he was suffering, Alekseev got out of his bed and implored the tsar 'on his knees' to seek the political solution recommended by Golitsyn. His request, however, was again to no avail. Returning from the frustrating audience, Alekseev told General A.S. Lukomskii how the emperor was displeased with Golitsyn's telegram, and added with resignation that the emperor did not want to talk to Alekseev. A few hours later Nicholas appeared in person in Lukomskii's room and handed a copy of the imperial order to Golitsyn, rejecting Golitsyn's resignation and informing him of the appointment of the new commander of the Petrograd Military District. The tsar declared: 'This is my final decision, which I shall not change, and therefore, it is useless to report to me further on this issue.'¹⁹ Early in the morning, shortly before his

17 Alekseev–Mikhail Aleksandrovich conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 12; Document 79, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 209–10; Browder/Kerensky 1961, pp. 86–7.

18 Alekseev–Mikhail Aleksandrovich conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 12; Document 79, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 10; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 87.

19 Lukomskii 1922, vol. 1, pp. 126–7; Basily 1973, p. 111. Nicholas to Golitsyn, *Fevral'skaia*

departure, Nicholas received General Ivanov in the salon car of the imperial train, and appointed him military dictator of the Petrograd Military District by extending his power to civilian affairs.

The Tsar Leaves Mogilev and Travels for Two Days by Train

As firm as ever in his rejection of compromise, Nicholas and his entourage left Mogilev at five o'clock on the morning of 28 February. He had no inkling of what was in store for him on this fateful journey. As the train left the station, soldiers assembled on the platform for departure to the front shouted enthusiastic hurrahs. Spontaneously – or rather because it was the routine on such occasions – they began singing a hymn.²⁰

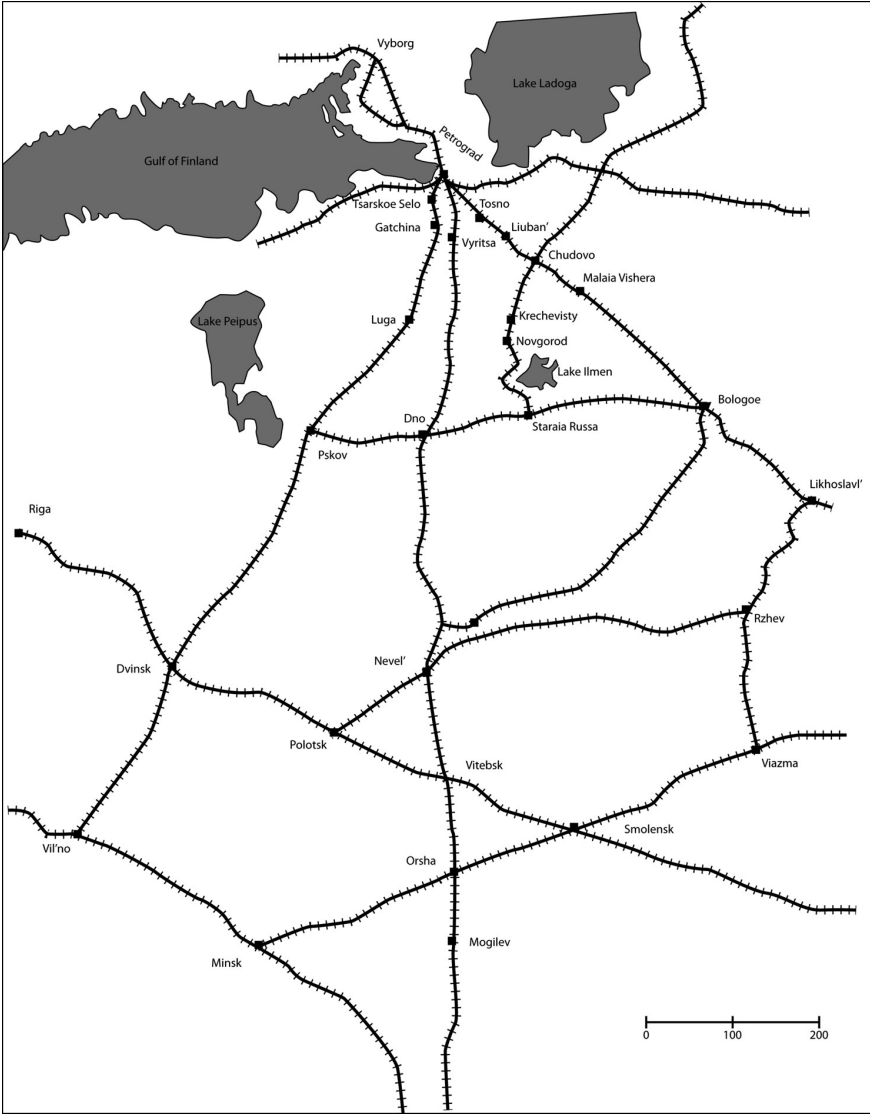
Since the direct line between Mogilev and Tsarskoe Selo was reserved for General Ivanov's expedition, the tsar and his entourage travelled along the longer, roundabout route, through Orsha, Smolensk, Viaz'ma, Rzhev, Likhoslavl' and the Nikolaevskii Line from Likhoslavl' through Bologoe, Malaia Vishera and Tosno, and from Tosno to Tsarskoe Selo from a branch line (see Map 2 and Map 3).

For security reasons the tsar and his entourage always travelled in two trains – the suite train and the imperial train.²¹ Train B, which held the entourage, proceeded first and any information they received along the way was relayed in code to Train A, which was moving one hour behind the suite train. The two trains moved slowly through the snow-covered countryside without obstruction. Colonel von Thal', commandant of the railway regiment, who was

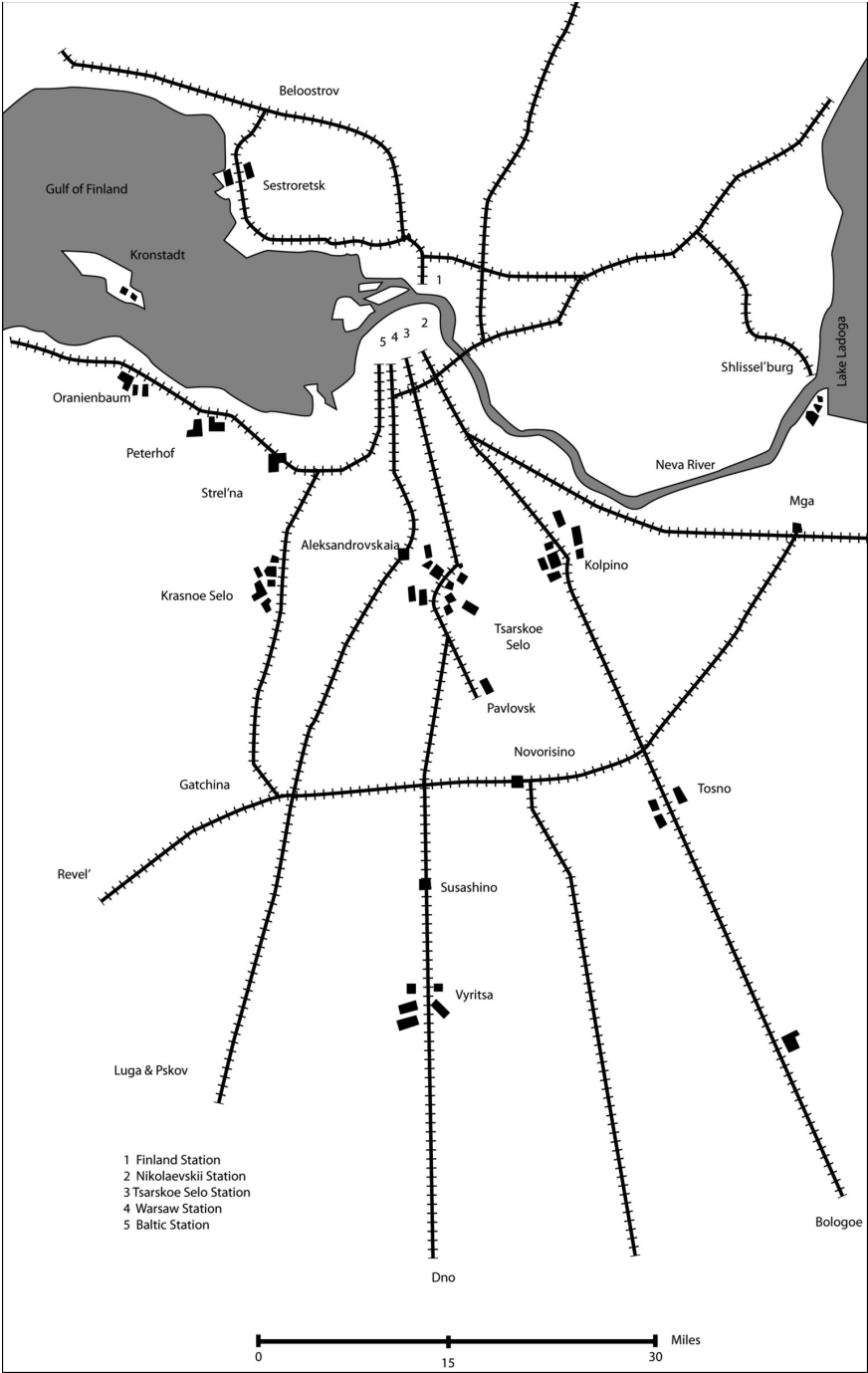
revoliutsiia 1927a, p. 13. Kulikov argues that Nicholas and Ivanov did not intend to suppress the revolution with military means, but sought political solution by agreeing to form a responsible ministry. Kulikov 2014b, pp. 354–6. This assertion is questionable.

20 According to Mordvinov, Naryshkin, who witnessed the scene, whispered to Mordvinov: 'Who knows? This might be the last hurrah the emperor might hear'. Mordvinov 1923, p. 96. This is unlikely, since no one could possibly have expected Nicholas's abdication as early as 28 February.

21 The emperor's entourage consisted of the following: minister of the imperial court, General Count V.B. Frederiks; Flag Captain General K.D. Nilov; Palace Commandant Major-General V.N. Voeikov; head of military campaign bureau, Major-General K.A. Naryshkin; commander of the convoy of His Majesty, Major-General Count A.N. Grabbe; Count Nitikin; court historian, Major-general D.N. Dubenskii; commander of the railway regiment, Major-General Tsabel'; imperial physician, Professor S.A. Fedorov; military ceremony, Baron Rudolf A. Stakelberg; aide-de-camp to the emperor, Colonel Mordvinov; and Marshal of the court, V.A. Dolgorukii. Dubenskii, 1922, p. 22.



MAP 2 *Nicholas II's Railway Travel, February 28-March 1*



MAP 3 Railways near Petrograd and Tsarskoe Selo

on board the suite train, noted that 'There was absolutely no sign of disturbance or confusion either along the railway or in the cities we passed through. Everything was quiet and calm'.²² The gendarmes and the troops protecting the railway stations greeted the imperial trains with loud hurrahs as they passed through the stations. As they went along, however, in contrast to the quiet surroundings, they began receiving disturbing news of the deteriorating situation in Petrograd. The suite train B, which arrived at Rzhev at five o'clock in the evening, learned that in Petrograd a 'Provisional Government' (actually the Duma Committee) had been formed. This news was confirmed four hours later when Bublikov's telegram to all the railway stations in Russia reached Train B between Likhoslavl' and Bologoe. Nevertheless, this did not change Nicholas's plans; in fact, he did not appear to attach any significance to it at all.²³

As the suite train approached Bologoe, however, even more disturbing news arrived. At a small station near Bologoe the entourage received an order signed by a certain Grekov, who assumed the title of commandant of Nikolaevskii Station in Petrograd, directed at the stationmasters of the Nikolaevskii Line and demanding that they reroute the imperial trains directly to Petrograd and not allow them to proceed to Tsarskoe Selo. The entourage immediately discussed what course they should take. The court historian, D.N. Dubenskii, sent a telegram to Voeikov in Train A, outlining this alarming news and advising that the imperial trains should change directions at Bologoe towards Pskov rather than risking the danger of falling into the hands of the rebels. To Dubenskii's disappointment, however, the telegram from Voeikov that awaited the suite train at Bologoe instructed Train B to 'break through to Tsarskoe Selo at all costs'.²⁴

Despite the entourage's deep misgivings, the suite train proceeded as far as Malaia Vishera, where it arrived at 1:55 a.m. on 1 March. When von Thal'

22 Tal' (Hoover), p. 20. Colonel von Thal' was, as commandant of the railway regiment, responsible for the technical details of the movement of the trains as well as for general information. His handwritten manuscript in the Hoover Institution is one of the most important and accurate sources of information regarding the movement of the imperial trains from 28 February to 1 March.

23 In neither of two telegrams he sent to his wife on the way nor in his diary did he mention anything about incoming news. The entry for 28 February in his diary simply states: 'I went to bed at 3:25, since I talked for a long time with N.I. Ivanov, whom I am sending to Petrograd with troops in order to restore order. I slept until 10. I left Mogilev at five in the morning. The weather is frosty and sunny. During the day we went through Viaz'ma, Rzhev, and Likhoslavl' at nine'. *Dnevnik Nikolaia Romanova* 1927 p. 137.

24 Tal' (Hoover), pp. 23, 30; Dubenskii 1922, pp. 40–1.

was giving the stationmaster instructions to make arrangements for departure, an officer of the railway regiment, Lieutenant Geliakh, arrived in the station from the opposite direction, and brought grave news. The stations Liuban' and Tosno had been captured by revolutionary troops led by companies of the Lithuanian Regiment. Armed with machine guns, these rebels had completely destroyed the railway regiment that guarded the stations. The troops that had occupied Liuban' and Tosno were now approaching Malaia Vishera.²⁵ The imperial train A arrived fifteen minutes after this frightening news was brought to the entourage. To the surprise of the worried entourage, however, all the passengers including Voeikov were fast asleep. The news was immediately brought to Voeikov. Some favoured returning to Mogilev, but a majority of the entourage proposed to go to Pskov. Voeikov finally made the decision to direct the trains to Pskov – the headquarters of the northern front, where he could expect reliable troops and have access to the Hughes telegraphic apparatus. Nicholas, who was awakened and informed of this decision, readily approved it. He had not abandoned his intention of joining his family, and Pskov was closer to Tsarskoe Selo than Mogilev was.²⁶

The trains left Malaia Vishera at 3:35 a.m. back for Bologoe. Rodzianko sent a telegram requesting a meeting with the emperor at Bologoe, but before this telegram arrived, the imperial trains left Bologoe. The trains reversed order, with Train A going first and Train B leaving twenty minutes later. They returned to Bologoe at seven o'clock in the morning, and changed direction to the west. As soon as the imperial trains left the Nikolaevskii Line, new information from the capital ceased to arrive. The emperor's company noticed no signs of disturbance along the line. All security measures were carried out with precision. As the imperial train passed the station at Staraia Russa, they saw a large crowd on the platform taking off their hats and bowing deeply. Dubenskii noted: 'Our trains proceeded quietly without the slightest difficulty. The only change in our movement was that we proceeded more slowly'.²⁷

When the imperial trains reached Dno around half past four in the afternoon, Rodzianko's telegram awaited the emperor. The Chairman of the Duma requested an immediate audience with the tsar on 'an urgent matter' at Dno Station, where he was expected to have arrived hours earlier. Pacing on the platform with some of his entourage, Nicholas waited patiently but in vain for Rodzianko's arrival. More than half an hour had elapsed, but Rodzianko never

25 Dubenskii 1922, pp. 41–2; Tal' (Hoover), p. 34.

26 Tal' (Hoover), pp. 36–37; Dubenskii 1922, p. 43; Voeikov 1936, pp. 204–5.

27 Dubenskii 1922, p. 45.

showed up. Voeikov telegraphed Petrograd and discovered that although Rodzianko's train had been prepared for his departure, he had been preoccupied with some important meeting and had not left Petrograd. At the same time, Voeikov learned that the railway line connecting the Vindarskii Line and Tsarskoe Selo had been seized by revolutionary troops. On this information the tsar abandoned his plan to go to Tsarskoe Selo and decided to proceed to Pskov, and wait for Rodzianko there.²⁸

The tsar finally arrived at Pskov at half past seven on the evening of 1 March. The absence of ceremony usually accorded to such an occasion immediately struck the entourage. There was no official reception, nor was a guard of honour present. On the platform the governor of Pskov and his subordinates welcomed the emperor, but conspicuous was the absence of the commander of the northern front, General Ruzskii, and his staff. Only a few minutes afterwards, Ruzskii arrived with his chief of staff, General Iurii N. Danilov, to meet the emperor.²⁹

The two days when Nicholas was travelling along the railway line in the countryside of Russia were crucial moments for the outcome of the February Revolution. The Duma Committee and the military leaders had defined their attitude toward the revolution during these two days. The political atmosphere on the evening of 1 March, when Nicholas arrived in Pskov, was radically different from the one he had left behind in Mogilev. Nicholas's failure to intervene actively during these crucial two days was, indeed, consequential to the outcome of political developments. That Nicholas lost two valuable days was not necessarily a historical accident. An important force was at work to nullify Nicholas's intervention in the course of events. When one analyses the information Nicholas received throughout this journey, one cannot but recognise a certain artificialness in it. Nicholas changed the direction of the trains based on information supplied by a single officer of the railway regiment, the accuracy of which was not verified by any other evidence. In fact, the only evidence of the capture of Liuban' and Tosno comes from the second-hand information of the imperial entourage. It is strange also that the tsar's company suddenly received no further information as soon as the trains changed their direction at Malaia Vishera, although they had received numerous reports until then indicating the seriousness of the situation in Petrograd. The report on the seizure of the branch line between the Vindarskii Line and Tsarskoe Selo – the report that led Nicholas to abandon the journey to Tsarskoe Selo from Dno – is not corroborated by other historical evidence, either. In fact, General Ivanov

28 Voeikov 1936, pp. 205–6; Tal' (Hoover), pp. 42–3.

29 Dubenskii 1922, pp. 46–7.

had no trouble travelling that route during the day. It is incongruous to assume that Rodzianko's train was arranged without trouble, when the commandant of the station defiantly ordered the capture of the imperial trains. To solve these mysterious circumstances, we must now turn to the policy of the Duma Committee during these two days.

The Duma Committee and the Monarchy

Rodzianko and the Monarchy

The Duma Committee was confronted with three crucial issues on the problem of power. The first was what to do with the monarchy, second, what government should be formed, and third, what relations the new government was to have with the Petrograd Soviet. And all these questions were closely connected with the power struggle within the Duma Committee. Two ambitious men, Rodzianko and Miliukov, struggled for the position of power, while Kerenskii, using his popularity among the insurgents, quietly extended his influence.¹ Guchkov, though himself not officially a member of the Duma Committee, kept constant and close contact with the Duma Committee members, and sought to achieve his goal of a palace coup, taking advantage of the pressure of the revolution. Eventually at the crucial meeting on the night of 1–2 March, the Duma Committee made three critical decisions: first, it decided to seek Nicholas II's abdication, second, it decided to form a provisional government separate from the Duma Committee and the State Duma, and third, it decided to gain the support of the insurgents by gaining the approval of the Soviet Executive Committee for the Provisional Government. In the previous chapter, we saw the result of negotiations between the Duma Committee and the Soviet Executive Committee on the conditions of 'transfer of power'. In this chapter, we will examine the question of the monarchy, and we will turn to the formation of the Provisional Government in Chapter 27.

At the beginning Rodzianko, as chairman of the Duma as well as the head of the Duma Committee, enjoyed unquestioned leadership. He pursued his policy in the name of the Duma and the Duma Committee without consulting other members. All the proclamations and orders of the Duma Committee were issued in the name of Rodzianko, chairman of the Duma. At first, his colleagues accepted his leadership, since they found his authority useful in extending the prestige of the Duma Committee, whose legitimacy was questionable without its parent body of the State Duma. But as the revolution developed further in the capital, Rodzianko's influence slipped considerably,

1 For the rivalry between Miliukov and Rodzianko see Katkov 1967, pp. 291–3.

and Miliukov replaced Rodzianko as the Duma Committee's spokesman. With this shift of power, the Duma Committee's policy toward the monarchy took a dramatic twist.

His personal ambition and conservative desire to avoid a drastic political change guided Rodzianko's conduct during the February Revolution, although he appears to have accepted the necessity of staging a palace coup to remove the empress's influence from the emperor.² He thought of himself as a logical candidate to head a ministry of confidence. In fact, his name was often mentioned for the post of the chairman of the Council of Ministers in a list of a possible ministry of confidence circulated among liberal opposition circles.³ But Rodzianko never acquired popularity among a majority of the liberals, not to mention the radical liberals. The Kadets did not trust him, suspecting him too eager to compromise with the bureaucracy. Thus, in August 1915, when various opposition circles circulated a list of a possible ministry of confidence, the Kadets supported Prince L'vov rather than Rodzianko. In 1916, when public opinion was radically polarised, the liberal opposition appeared to be divided into two groups. The first group considered Prince L'vov a more suitable candidate for the head of a ministry of confidence, while the more conservative group gravitated to Rodzianko as the last hope of bridging the gap between the liberals and the bureaucracy. Realising his slipping popularity with the liberals, Rodzianko tried to mobilise the support of the aristocracy to bolster his strength at the end of 1916 and at the beginning of 1917.⁴

When the insurrection triumphed in Petrograd and all governmental authority disappeared, many considered the Duma to be the only organ that could restore order in the streets. Ironically, it was the revolution that thrust Rodzianko's prestige to its pinnacle. When the British military attaché, Sir Alfred Knox, visited Rodzianko on 26 February, and suggested that Krivoshein might be a good choice to head a government that could allay the dissatisfactions of the people, Rodzianko did not agree with Knox. When asked if Rodzianko himself would take on the job, he answered without hesitation that he would.⁵

Until 28 February, Rodzianko's proposed solution was the formation of a ministry of confidence. He did not entertain the possibility of the slightest change in the fundamental political structure; in fact, he was convinced that the prestige of the Duma was the last salvation of Russia from the uncontrol-

2 Rodzianko interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 106; Lyandres 2013, pp. 284–5.

3 See Chapter 2.

4 See Chapters 7 and 9.

5 Knox 1921, vol. 2, p. 531.

lable revolution.⁶ In the telegrams dispatched to Nicholas on 26 and 27 February, Rodzianko implored the tsar to grant a ministry of confidence to solve the crisis in Petrograd. The new situation created by the soldier's insurrection convinced him all the more of the necessity of securing this concession. On the evening of 27 February he attempted to use the influence of Grand Duke Mikhail to overcome Nicholas's stubborn opposition and to have him accept the formation of a ministry of confidence. Nicholas, however, rejected outright Mikhail's recommendations. To Rodzianko's disappointment, Mikhail easily retreated when he met with his brother's anger.⁷ There was one curious interlude in this futile attempt. Urging the tsar to make the political concession, Mikhail recommended Prince L'vov, Rodzianko's rival, as a possible candidate to head a ministry of confidence. L'vov's candidacy to head a ministry of confidence had been pushed by the Progressive Bloc and especially by Miliukov. It is not clear how L'vov's name came to be adopted. But the mention of L'vov's name strongly suggests that opposition to Rodzianko existed on the first day of the Duma Committee.

Rodzianko was undaunted by the failure of his first attempt, and pursued compromise through a different channel. But the rapid development of the revolution in Petrograd must have been a great shock to him. By 28 February, he modified his position, now advocating a more fundamental political change involving the establishment of a constitutional system in the form of a responsible ministry. Already on 27 February, he had established contact with Nicholas's uncle, Grand Duke Pavel Aleksandrovich, who was at the time in charge of the guard units in Tsarskoe Selo, through a lawyer, N.N. Ivanov, who travelled back and forth between the Tauride Palace and Tsarskoe Selo.⁸ A draft manifesto was written by Prince M.S. Putiatin, Vice Commandant of the Imperial Court, and approved by Pavel and Rodzianko.

It was decided that upon Nicholas's arrival at Tsarskoe Selo, Pavel would meet the tsar before the latter had a chance to join his wife, and press upon him the necessity of granting a responsible ministry and of creating a constitutional monarchy.⁹ When it became known that the tsar would not arrive in

6 For Rodzianko's role during the February Revolution, see Hasegawa 1976, pp. 154–7.

7 See Chapter 15, 17 and 22.

8 N.N. Ivanov was Vice-Chairman of the Aid to German POWs, for which Grand Duke Pavel's wife, Princess Paley was its chair. Ivanov had close connections with Grand Duke Pavel and Princess Paley, while through his work he established close relationship with Rodzianko. Ivanov, *Memoirs*, Bakhmeteff, p. 1. Ganelin 2014e, pp. 369–74, 378–81. For Rodzianko and the grand dukes' manifesto, see also Ioffe 1985, pp. 53–8.

9 Ivanov, *Memoir*, Bakhmeteff, p. 3. Ivanov's memoir was first used by Burdzhakov. See Burdzhakov

Tsarskoe Selo and that no political concessions would be forthcoming from him, Rodzianko and Pavel decided to send the draft proposal of the manifesto in the name of the empress and the grand dukes to the Stavka for the approval of Nicholas. But Alexandra, considering such a manifesto 'idiotic', refused to endorse it. When N.N. Ivanov brought the draft manifesto to the empress in order to prevent the anticipated accusations that the grand dukes were plotting behind her back, he encountered Alexandra's outburst of anger. The empress shouted at Ivanov: 'There is no revolution here. What we have is the revolution concocted by the Duma, and it is treason!'¹⁰

Lawyer Ivanov left Tsarskoe Selo, and returned to Petrograd. Using a 'revolutionary' automobile prepared by Rodzianko, presumably through the Military Commission, Ivanov sought the signature of Grand Duke Kirill Aleksandrovich first. Kirill signed the document, and made his car available for Ivanov to seek Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich. Grand Duke Mikhail had stayed in the Winter Palace after he had a meeting with Rodzianko and the Duma deputies on the evening of 27 February. But on the following day, on the order of the Military Commission, all the guards of the Winter Palace were removed. Having learned from General Komarov, Commandant of the Winter Palace, that the Grand Duke had moved to the apartment of Princess O.P. Putiatina on Millionnaia 12, Ivanov finally found Grand Duke Mikhail to sign the draft manifesto. The grand duke told Ivanov that he had to think about it, and asked him how much time he had. Ivanov told him that he could wait only for 10 to 15 minutes. As the grand duke disappeared into the next room, Ivanov heard him talking on the phone with his wife, Countess Brasova. Panicked, Ivanov knocked at the door and warned him not to talk to anyone on the phone, since the telephone network was under the control of the revolutionaries. Ivanov noted in his memoir: 'The Grand Duke cannot make any decision without his wife'. In the end, Mikhail also signed the manifesto.¹¹

Thus, the manifesto gained the signatures of the three senior grand dukes, Pavel Aleksandrovich (Alexander II's son, Nicholas II's uncle), Kirill Vladimirovich (Grandson of Alexander II and Nicholas II's cousin) and Mikhail Aleksandrovich (Nicholas's brother). The draft manifesto stated:

lov 1967, p. 308. The handwritten memoirs at the Bakhmeteff Collection at Columbia University must be identical with the manuscript Burdzhakov used at GARF (then TGAOR, f. 622, op 1, d. 22.) It is reproduced as *Prilozhenie 3* in Ganelin 2014e, pp. 378–83, taken from GARF f. 5881, op. 2, d. 368.

10 Ivanov, *Velikii Kniaz'*, Bakhmeteff, p. 11; Ganelin 2014e, p. 374.

11 Ivanov, *Velikii Kniaz'*, Bakhmeteff, pp. 9–10; Ganelin 2014e, pp. 374, 383–4. Ivanov gave the grand duke only five minutes in Ganelin's document.

We grant the Russian Empire a constitutional system and enjoin to continue the interrupted session of the State Duma and the State Council by Our decree. We entrust the chairman of the State Duma with the immediate formation of a temporary cabinet which relies on the confidence of the country and which in agreement with Us is concerned with the convocation of the legislative assembly which is necessary for the urgent reexamination ... of the draft of the new fundamental laws of the Russian Empire.¹²

In this manifesto Rodzianko restored himself as the candidate for the head of the responsible ministry and envisaged that the Duma would draft the new fundamental laws. In other words, the manifesto proposed a new state structure based on the Duma. Presumably, Rodzianko realised that in the face of the rising revolutionary temper the establishment of a ministry of confidence alone would not be enough to calm it down. But this was not necessarily the concession that the Duma Chairman was reluctantly forced to make, but rather represented his cherished dream. Rodzianko and the grand dukes must have hoped that this manifesto, like the October Manifesto in the 1905 Revolution, would ultimately contribute to the end of the revolution and the opening of a new era.¹³

Despite the hope shared by Rodzianko and the grand dukes, the manifesto was never signed by Nicholas. Nicholas did not even receive the draft manifesto. By the time the draft was signed by the grand dukes, Nicholas had left Mogilev. While he was travelling in the train, all the telegraphic communications were intercepted by the Duma Committee. Alexandra sent a letter to Nicholas on 2 March: 'Pavel ... is trying now to work with all his power and is attempting to save us all by a noble, and reckless method: he had composed an idiotic manifesto concerning a constitution after the war, etc'.¹⁴ After collecting the signatures of three grand dukes, Ivanov brought the signed Manifesto to the

12 *Ogonek*, no. 1, 1923; Hasegawa 1976, pp. 154–5; *Prilozhenie* No. 1 and No. 2 in Ganelin 2014e, pp. 376–8.

13 GARF, f. 622, op. 1, d. 22, l. 87 cited in G.Z. Ioffe 1977, p. 57. To the question of Ivanov – if the tsar entrusted Rodzianko with the formation of a ministry of confidence, would he be willing to take it? – Rodzianko answered without a moment of hesitation, 'Of course'. Ioffe 1987, p. 54.

14 Perepiska 1923, p. 215; Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 79. Ganelin notes the change in the empress's attitude. At first she did not even want to listen, but later she acknowledged the attempts by the grand dukes to save the monarchy. Ganelin 2014e, p. 375.

Tauride Palace on 1 March, navigating through the Petrograd streets occupied by the excited crowds. According to Ivanov,

I carried the manifesto to the Duma Committee and with each step I was convinced that the cause of the Romanovs was defeated, that Rodzianko's cabinet would not materialise, that the masses would need greater sacrifice.

When he arrived in Rodzianko's office, he found the chairman of the Duma, looking 'crushed', lying on the sofa, surrounded by a few colleagues of the Duma Committee. 'I told [Rodzianko] about the manifesto', Ivanov recalled: 'I think that this was too late'. He answered: 'I am of the same opinion'.¹⁵ Ivanov handed the manifesto to Miliukov, who jotted down the date of receipt on the copy. The manifesto became a scrap of paper.

The episode involving the draft manifesto raises some unanswered questions. Why was the draft manifesto, which was approved by Rodzianko on 28 February, brought back to the Duma Committee on 1 March? Why did Rodzianko, who took the initiative in this move, look 'crushed', as Ivanov described, on 1 March? Why did the draft manifesto turn up in the hands of Miliukov? These questions can be answered only by understanding the power struggle within the Duma Committee about the dynastic question.¹⁶ But before we turn to this subject, we must examine another move Rodzianko made in seeking to wrest a radical political solution from Nicholas.

The Duma Committee Manipulates Emperor's Railway Movement

Nicholas's departure from Mogilev gave each faction of the Duma Committee the necessary time to formulate its policy toward the monarchy and the group favouring the abdication of Nicholas a chance to impose its policy upon the Duma Committee. By separating himself from the Stavka, the emperor became isolated from reliable troops during these crucial hours, while he and his small entourage in the imperial trains became prey to the manipulations of the Duma Committee's commissar of transport, Bublikov, and his assistant, Lomonosov, who placed virtually all the railway network and railway telegraphic communications in Russia under their control on behalf of the Duma Committee.¹⁷

15 Ivanov, *Velikii Kniaz'*, Bakhmetieff, p. 10; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 310; Ganelin 2014e, p. 374.

16 See Hasegawa 1976, pp. 156–7.

17 According to Gerasimov, Bublikov received all telegrams which tracked the movement of

Bublikov and Lomonosov worked closely with Rodzianko and the Military Commission. Nekrasov testified after the revolution that Bublikov, 'on our orders', directed 'the movement of the tsar and echelons via telegraph'.¹⁸ The tsar's departure from Mogilev made the execution of Rodzianko's policy easier, since he could mobilise the support of the military leaders to achieve his goal without Nicholas's interference. At the same time, Rodzianko considered it necessary to isolate the tsar from both Tsarskoe Selo and from Petrograd. In Petrograd his safety might be endangered by the unruly insurgents – an incident that might touch off a civil war. Tsarskoe Selo was dangerously close to the revolutionary capital, and furthermore, Rodzianko feared that the reunion of the imperial couple would inevitably reinforce Nicholas's stubborn opposition to political concessions.

The Military Commission received the news between 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning of 28 February that the imperial trains marked 'A' and 'B' had left Mogilev. The Military Commission decided to let the trains proceed toward Bologoe for the time being without any interference, while Bublikov and Lomonosov were closely monitoring their movement through railway telegraphs. Nekrasov, and presumably Rodzianko as well, learned from Bublikov that Adjutant-General I.L. Tatishchev had left Tsarskoe Selo in the direction of Tosno through Gatchina to meet the imperial trains. Rodzianko and Nekrasov did not yet know if the tsar's family was on Tatishchev's train, and they did not know that Nicholas's children had measles. Tatishchev wanted to proceed further toward Liuban', and Rodzianko and Nekrasov received the news that the imperial trains had reached Malaia Vishera. The Duma Committee leaders faced the danger of the imperial couple being reunited with one another. That had to be prevented at all cost. According to Nekrasov, a railway engineer by profession, Tatishchev wanted to proceed to Liuban', 'but could not'.¹⁹ Nekrasov's expression was ambiguous, but clearly Tatishchev was stuck in Tosno due to the sabotage of the railway officials on Bublikov's order.

This plan to prevent the rendezvous between Tatishchev's train and the imperial trains met obstructions from an unexpected quarter. Between Likhoslavl' and Bologoe the suite train learned of the instructions from the commandant of Nikolaevskii Station, K.F. Grekov, to the stationmasters in the Nikolaevskii Line to redirect the imperial trains to Petrograd. This obviously ran

trains, and made it impossible for troops to arrive to suppress the revolution. Gerasimov called Bublikov's effort 'a "rescue committee"'. Gerasimov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 97.

18 Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 151. 'Our orders' meant most likely the orders of the Military Commission.

19 Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 151–2.

counter to Bublikov's and Nerasov/Rodzianko's objectives. Grekov's instructions, which many historians have believed to be an individual act of an unknown revolutionary who had taken over control of the railway station, actually originated from the Military Commission.²⁰ Grekov was not a revolutionary, but a lieutenant officially appointed by the Military Commission to seize both Nikolaevskii and Tsarskoe Selo stations.²¹ It is not clear who instructed Grekov to direct the imperial trains to Petrograd, but Lawyer N.N. Ivanov heard Kerenskii giving orders on the phone to direct the trains to Petrograd. Met with strenuous objections from N.N. Ivanov about this dangerous order, Kerenskii changed his mind, and ordered the trains to be directed to Tsarskoe Selo.²²

Presumably on Nekrasov/Rodzianko's order, Bublikov and Lomonosov immediately took measures to resolve the conflict between Grekov's unauthorised order and the Military Commission's order. Once Bublikov's objective was explained, Grekov cooperated wholeheartedly with the commissar of transport. The archival materials in the Military Commission clearly indicate that the Military Commission, the ministry of transport, and Grekov worked in harmony to pursue the plan outlined by Bublikov, whose actions were also coordinated with the Military Commission and Rozianko.²³ Early in the morning of 1 March, Lomonosov gave the assistant chief of the railway movement at Nikolaevskii Station instructions to change the direction of the imperial trains if so instructed.²⁴

Bublikov and Nekrasov succeeded early on in recruiting the chief of the railway service for the Moscow–Vindavo–Rybinskawa railway lines, L.A. Grinchuk-Lukashevich, who maintained constant telephone communications with Bublikov, monitoring every move of the imperial trains.²⁵ The Moscow–Vindavo–Rybinskaia lines are railway arteries that emanated from Petrograd. They

20 Katkov states: 'The order was signed by "Grekov", a Cossack subaltern, but later, when Bublikov's assistant, Lomonosov, made enquiries at the Petrograd terminal, Grekov had disappeared, and was never heard of again'. Katkov 1967, p. 311. Relying on the memoirs of Rodzianko and Lomonosov, Mel'gunov argues that Grekov, appointed by the Petrograd Soviet, issued this order 'despite the instruction given by the railway engineers under the influence of the Duma'. In Mel'gunov's opinion, this chaotic situation, typical of the time, was not the conscious doing of the revolutionary leaders. Mel'gunov 1961, p. 169.

21 Order no. 29, *Fevral'sakaia revoliutsiia* 1930, p. 24. Later Grekov was appointed head of the security forces of the Neva Gates, RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 48, l. 5.

22 Ivanov, *Velikii Kniaz'*, Bakhmeteff, p. 8.

23 See GARF, f. 3348, d. 129, 17, 21; GARF, f. 6, op. 1, d. 1722, ll. 3–5, 7, 9.

24 Lomonosov 1921, p. 29.

25 'Kak byl zaderzhan poezda Nikolaia II', *Utro Rossii*, No. 100, April 21, 1917, quoted in Kulikov 2004b, p. 364.

included the Petrograd–Bologoe–Rybinsk–Medvedevo–Moscow line (from Nikolaevskii Station), the Tsarskoe Selo–Dno branch line (from Warsaw Station), and the Chudovo–Novgorod branch line.

The other major railway lines crucial for control of the imperial trains and General Ivanov's troops were the North–Western railway lines, which included the Petrograd–Krasnoe Selo–Gatchina–Narva–Baltic ports (from Baltic Station), the Gatchina–Tosno branch line, the Petrograd–Oranienbaum–Petergof, and the Petrograd–Aleksandrovkaia–Gatchina–Luga–Pskov–Warsaw (from Warsaw Station). See Map 2 (p. 468) and Map 3 (p. 469). The chief of the North–Western lines, F.M. Valuev, refused to submit himself to the new commissar of transport, and instructed his subordinates to stop all the movements under his jurisdiction. Moreover, Valuev took the train attempting to meet the tsar at Tosno, but on the way, he was captured by the insurgents, presumably sent by the Military Commission. Valuev was taken to Petrograd and shot at Izmailovskii Bridge on the Fontanka.²⁶

A Legend of the 'Capture' of Tosno and Liuban'

Shortly after 3 a.m. on 1 March, Bublikov received a report that the imperial trains had reached Malaia Vishera. Further, a telegram from Liuban' indicated that the imperial trains would soon reach Tosno to switch the route to Tsarskoe Selo and that the commander of the corps of gendarmes had already instructed railway authorities to uncouple locomotives for the imperial trains. If they had to be redirected, it would have to be done quickly. Bublikov immediately asked Rodzianko for instructions, but received only an ambiguous reply that nothing had been determined yet.²⁷

It was under these circumstances that the entourage on the suite train were informed that Liuban' and Tosno had been captured by the revolutionaries. The entourage decided to redirect the imperial trains from Malaia Vishera back to Bologoe, and from Bologoe to Pskov, solely based on the information given by Lieutenant Geliakh.²⁸ Strangely, this information is not corroborated by any other first-hand evidence, and all the documentary evidence of the capture of Liuban' and Tosno comes invariably from the memoirs of the entourage on the imperial trains.

26 Kulikov 2014b, p. 362.

27 GARF, f. 2248, d. 129, l. 20; Lomonosov 1921, p. 30; Spiridovich 1962, vol. 3, p. 203.

28 See Chapter 22.

The only incident that took place at Liuban' was minor. An echelon of troops arrived at the station, although it is not known what military unit they belonged to or where they came from. The commander of the unit commandeered a locomotive and four wagons from the railway authorities. The armed soldiers got on board and left for Petrograd.²⁹ But this was hardly an occupation of the station by insurgents, as narrated by Lieutenant Geliakh. After their departure no troops remained at the station, and the soldiers had gone in the direction of Petrograd, not in the direction of Malaia Vishera, as Geliakh indicated. Furthermore, there was no mention of the capture of Tosno by the revolutionaries.

While there is no evidence to prove the seizure of Liuban' and Tosno, archival materials reveal that railway authorities in cooperation with Grekov and Bublikov did everything to change the direction of the imperial trains. Lomonosov had already given instructions to Nikolaevskii Station about changing the route of the two trains, although he did not spell out the details of the instructions in his memoirs. Engineer Karelin of the ministry of transport informed Grekov that Malaia Vishera had sworn allegiance to the new government and that all the stations from Petrograd to Bologoe were following its directions for control of the railways.³⁰ A telephone call that Lomonosov received from Malaia Vishera after the imperial trains left the station reported: 'According to the instructions of engineer Kern [assistant stationmaster] train A left here at 4:40 to return to Bologoe'.³¹ Another telegram from Bol'shaia Vishera to Grekov reported that both trains had been redirected from Malaia Vishera back to Bologoe.³² These materials confirm that Lomonosov, Bublikov, and Grekov had firm control over the events at Malaia Vishera. Thus, one can conclude that the seizure of Liuban' and Tosno by the revolutionaries had not actually taken place, and that it was a fabrication concocted by Lomonosov and Bublikov to prevent the imperial trains from approaching either Tsarskoe Selo or Petrograd.³³

29 The report also stated that the soldiers' mood was against the Provisional Government, but we do not know if they were revolutionaries or monarchists. GARF, f. 3348, d. 129, l. 20; GARF, f. 6, op. 1, d. 1722, ll. 8–9.

30 GARF, f. 3348, d. 129, ll. 17, 21; GARF, f. 6, op. 1, d. 1722, ll. 3–5, 7, 9.

31 Lomonosov 1921, p. 43. According to Thal', Train A left Malaia Vishera at 3:35. Tal' (Hoover), pp. 76–7.

32 GARF, f. 3348, d. 129, l. 18.

33 There is no mention of the capture of the two stations in the two contemporary newspapers *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh deputatov* and *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistsov*. No information other than hearsay can be found in the collections of telegrams in the Stavka and in the headquarters of the northern front in Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a, *Telegrammy i razgovory* 1922. The first Soviet historian to turn

It was only then that Tatishchev's train was allowed to move from Tosno to Liuban', but when he learned that the imperial trains had moved back to Bologoe, he turned back and returned to Tsarskoe Selo.³⁴ The Duma leaders must have had a sigh of relief.

The Imperial Trains Leave Bologoe for Dno

The imperial trains reached Bologoe shortly before seven o'clock on the morning of 1 March. The news of their arrival at Bologoe was immediately relayed to Lomonosov, who called up Rodzianko for further instructions. This time, Rodzianko instructed Lomonosov to detain the trains at Bologoe and arrange a special train for him to take to Bologoe. Lomonosov dispatched a telegram to Nicholas on Rodzianko's behalf, which requested that the emperor wait in Bologoe for Rodzianko, since the latter wished to talk with him about 'the critical situation of the throne'.³⁵ It was about this time that Lawyer N.N. Ivanov was going through the Petrograd streets to collect the grand duke's signature for the draft manifesto. Presumably, Rodzianko intended to see the emperor at Bologoe and present him with the grand dukes' collective manifesto. Lomonosov's telegram to detain the imperial trains at Bologoe, however, did not reach Nicholas, since the army unit that controlled Bologoe Station, despite Grinchuk's instructions to detain both trains at Bologoe, let the imperial trains leave for Dno. They even failed to deliver Rodzianko's telegram to Voeikov so that the latter could make arrangements for the meeting between the emperor and the Chairman of the Duma. This news alarmed Bublikov and Lomonosov. Nekrasov and Rodzianko feared that the imperial trains might re-route from Dno to Tsarskoe Selo, where the emperor would join General Ivanov's troops as well as his family. It must be remembered that in defiance of Bublikov, Valuev was still

his attention to the problem of Nicholas's abdication, P.E. Shchegolev, found no evidence to substantiate the 'seizure' other than the accounts written by the tsar's entourage. See Shchegolev 1928. The most recent Soviet historians such as Burdzhakov and Leiberov, who used extensive archival materials, did not uncover any archival materials to prove the seizure. If the capture of the two stations was carried out by large forces, as indicated in Lieutenant Geliakh's report, the absence of firsthand materials is most strange. This suspicion can now be confirmed by the horse's mouth. Rodzianko himself testified that he directed that the tsar's trains be stopped at Bologoe. Rodzianko interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 110.

34 Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 152.

35 Lomonosov 1921, p. 33.

in control of the railway movements along the North-Western lines. In panic, Bublikov issued an order to send freight trains from Dno to jam the track.³⁶ This measure did not stop the imperial trains, but slowed their movement considerably.

In the meantime, Lomonosov personally went to Nikolaevskii Station to arrange a train for Rodzianko. He encountered no resistance from the insurgent soldiers who had occupied the station, and easily had the train ready. Nevertheless, despite Lomonosov's repeated inquiries to the Duma, Rodzianko did not come to the station. Shortly after half past one in the afternoon, the imperial trains passed Staraia Russa. When Lomonosov received this news, he changed plans with Rodzianko's approval, so that Rodzianko could meet the tsar at Dno instead of Bologoe, since it was 200 miles from Petrograd to Staraia Russa through Dno as compared with 260 miles through Bologoe.³⁷

When Train A arrived at Dno at 4:25 p.m. Rodzianko's telegram was awaiting the tsar: 'Your Majesty the Emperor, a special train is leaving now for Dno Station to deliver a report to you, Sire, concerning the general situation and measures necessary for the salvation of Russia. I earnestly implore you to wait for my arrival, for each moment is precious'.³⁸ Precious though each moment might be, Rodzianko failed to come to the station. It was already dark. Lomonosov kept calling the Duma. When he finally received an answer from Rodzianko, the latter instructed him to send another telegram to the tsar, explaining that extenuating circumstances made it impossible for Rodzianko to leave the capital.

The Duma leaders' order to detain the imperial trains came too late, since the police arrested all the railway station agents sympathetic to the Duma Committee, and thus Lomonosov's order to send freight trains between Dno and Tsarskoe Selo remained unfulfilled. At this point, the emperor and his entourage had three options: either proceed to Tsarskoe Selo, or return to Mogilev, or go to Pskov, the seat of the headquarters of the northern front. The worst option for the Duma leaders would have been the imperial train returning to Mogilev, where the emperor, protected by loyal troops, might reinforce his resolve to suppress the revolution, and further to resist any pressure for his abdication. To separate Nicholas and Alekseev was the Duma Committee's first priority. Also

36 Lomonosov 1921, p. 34; Bublikov 1918, p. 24; Kulikov 2014b, pp. 364–5.

37 Lomonosov 1921, pp. 35–8. Chikolini claimed that an order to arrest the emperor was sent to the Duno station, but Chikolini was mistaken here. Only the order to detain the tsar at Dno to wait for Rodzianko's arrival for a meeting was issued. Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 77.

38 Shchegolev 1928, pp. 45–6.

the Duma Committee was anxious to isolate Nicholas from Alexandra; thus it was interested in preventing the imperial trains from going to Tsarskoe Selo. The best option was to let the imperial trains proceed to Pskov, the headquarters of the northern front.³⁹ Nicholas was anxious to go to the place where he would have access to the Hughes Apparatus, and therefore, he preferred to go to Pskov.

Nicholas, tired of waiting for Rodzianko at Dno, had Voeikov call the Petrograd railway authorities directly. Voeikov learned that although Rodzianko's train was prepared, he could not leave the capital and that the railway line connecting the Vindarskii Line and Tsarskoe Selo had been seized by revolutionary troops.⁴⁰ The latter information, which is not supported by any other evidence, led the emperor's entourage to abandon their intention to reach Tsarskoe Selo. Voeikov contacted Grinchuk and received the assurance that the railway from Dno to Pskov was free of any obstructions.⁴¹ Nicholas had Voeikov send a telegram to Rodzianko saying that the tsar would wait for him in Pskov.

The tsar's entourage decided to go to Pskov in the hope that the emperor would safely be protected by the loyal troops of the northern front. The Duma leaders again breathed a sigh of relief. According to Nekrasov, 'He was allowed to travel there because it was safe for us – we were sure of the mood in Pskov'.⁴² Nekrasov meant that General Ruzskii was sympathetic to the Duma Committee. Rodzianko gave Lomonosov permission to let the imperial trains proceed to Pskov without obstruction.⁴³

39 There is a discrepancy between the 'Protkol sobytii' and the 'Protocol zasedanii' about what Bublikov intended to do with the imperial trains. According to the 'Protocol sobytii', he wanted to direct the trains in the direction of Tsarskoe Selo, while in the 'Protocol zasedanii' Bublikov took measures *not* to direct the trains in the direction of Tsarskoe Selo. See 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 125; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 255.

40 See Chapter 22. It is not clear whom Voeikov talked to, but it seems possible that, whoever it was, it was with the knowledge of Lomonosov and Bublikov.

41 Kulikov 2014b, p. 366.

42 Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 132.

43 Lomonosov 1921, p. 39. The attempts by Bublikov and Lomonosov to obstruct the movement of the imperial trains caused considerable alarm in the Stavka, which intercepted Bublikov's order to the railway authorities of the Vindavskii Line. *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 36. Alekseev strongly protested against such measures to Rodzianko and demanded that the Duma Committee take all necessary measures to guarantee the safe arrival of the imperial trains to Pskov. Alekseev to Rodzianko, no. 1845, *ibid.*, pp. 44–5. This threat might be the factor that facilitated Rodzianko's decision to let the imperial trains go to Pskov without obstruction. According to Kulikov, on 9 February, Rodzianko had a meet-

Rodzianko's failure to meet the tsar at Dno raises two important questions that have direct bearings on the Duma Committee's policy toward the monarchy. First, what was the motive that led Rodzianko to seek a special audience with the emperor? Second, why did he cancel the trip? According to Katkov, Rodzianko's purpose in requesting the audience was to arrest the tsar. This contention, which is based on the unreliable memoirs of Shidlovskii, does not seem to make much sense.⁴⁴ If Rodzianko had intended to arrest Nicholas, it would not have been necessary for him to travel to Bologoe or Dno. He could have easily redirected the imperial trains to Petrograd, where he could rely on the forces at the disposal of the Military Commission. Actually, in cooperation with Bublikov and Lomonosov, Rodzianko vigorously resisted Grekov's order to that effect, and avoided taking such drastic action – an incident that might provoke a civil war, which Rodzianko tried to avoid at all cost.

Exploring Nicholas' Abdication and the Soviet's Pressure

The reason behind Rodzianko's cancellation of the trip to meet Nicholas either at Bologoe and Dno was most likely related to the discussions within the Duma Committee on the question of the monarchy. According to the minutes of the Duma Committee, already on 28 February the Duma Committee came to conclude that Nicholas's abdication was the only way to restore order in the capital. The Duma Committee even drafted a manifesto about the abdication in favour of Aleksei under the regency of Grand Duke Mikhail.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the details in the internal discussion within the Duma Committee on this crucial question are not clear. The Duma Committee's record does not say who composed the draft, but neither Miliukov nor Guchkov were likely candidates. On 28 February, Miliukov stated: 'However this will end, one thing is certain: we have nothing in common with this scoundrel'.⁴⁶ If this account is correct, then the Duma Committee had gone one step beyond the draft proposal com-

ing of the liberal leaders with General A.M. Krymov and General Ruzskii, where the plot to detain the emperor at the headquarters of the Northern Front and force his abdication was discussed. Kulikov 200b, p. 366. His source is Nikolaevskii 1990, p. 96.

44 Katkov 1967, pp. 297, 299; Burdzhakov 1967, p. 311. See Hasegawa 1976, pp. 162–5.

45 'Protokoly sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 124; *Protokol zasedanii*, Nikolaev 2012, p. 254; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 548–59.

46 M. Skobelev, '25 fevralia–3 marta (Vospominaniia b. chlena sotsial-demokraticheskoi fraktsii Gosudarstvennoi dumy M. Skobeleva)', *Vecherniiaia Moskva*, 11 March, 1927, quoted in Nikolaev 2005, p. 548.

posed by Rodzianko and the grand dukes, which demanded merely a responsible government. The Duma Committee decided to send Rodzianko and Shdlovskii to meet the tsar at Blogoe. The Duma Committee's record implies that the purpose of this trip was to demand Nicholas's abdication in accordance with the decision reached on 28 February. But if one considers Rodzianko's attempt to mobilise the grand dukes for a responsible ministry of which other members of the Duma Committee became aware, it is possible to argue that Rodzianko's trip to Blogoe and later to Dno was treated with suspicion by his colleagues.⁴⁷

Rodzianko's trip to Dno met obstructions from another source. The Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet thought that Rodzianko's trip might be a conspiracy on his part to use Ivanov's troops to suppress the revolution. Chkhaidze objected to sending the two Duma Committee representatives insisting that the question of the dynasty should not be resolved without consultation of the Petrograd Soviet. He demanded the draft manifesto of Nicholas's abdication that had been drafted. By the evening Chkhaidze informed the Duma Committee that the question of the dynasty had been discussed in the Petrograd Soviet. The Petrograd Soviet was prepared to send reliable military units to accompany Rodzianko and the Duma deputies to the place of their rendezvous with the emperor, but only on the condition that the Duma Committee drop the second part of the manifesto, namely the transfer of power to Aleksei under Mikhail's regency. This was, obviously, tantamount to the demand for the end of the monarchical system. If the Duma Committee rejected this demand, the Soviet would not provide a military unit to escort the Duma delegates.⁴⁸

Contrary to Katkov's contention, throughout 28 February and 1 March Rodzianko appears to have resisted the growing sentiment within the Duma Committee that Nicholas should abdicate. In fact, when the Duma Committee finally accepted abdication as necessary during the night of 1–2 March, Rodzianko still refused to commit himself totally.⁴⁹ As Mel'gunov states, 'it is impossible to attribute to Rodzianko the idea of going to the tsar with the proposal of abdication from the throne, as is done by Shidlovskii. During the day of 1 March, he was not yet psychologically prepared to make such a radical decision.'⁵⁰ It would make more sense to interpret Rodzianko's motives in seeking an audi-

47 For a different interpretation, see Nikolaev 2005, p. 549. Nikolaev considers Chkhaidze's objection was crucial for derailing Rodzianko's trip.

48 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 125; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 255; also see Nikolaev 2005, 548–9; Savich 1993, p. 215.

49 See Chapter 25.

50 Mel'gunov 1961, p. 57; Ioffe 1987, p. 57.

ence with Nicholas as a continuation of the effort to gain Nicholas's consent to institute a constitutional monarchy based on the Duma, as described in the grand dukes' manifesto. And his indecision must have provoked the suspicion, not only from Chikeidze, but also from other members of the Duma Committee, that the Chairman of the Duma might make a secret deal with the emperor. The selection of Shidlovskii, Rodzianko's rival Octobrist, was perhaps intended to secure a watchdog for the Duma Committee, and thus to make sure that Rodzianko would not make a secret deal with the emperor.⁵¹

Nevertheless, Rodzianko's audience at Dno did not materialise. What prevented him from leaving the capital? It is often attributed to the opposition of the Soviet Executive Committee.⁵² It is true that the Executive Committee first opposed the departure of Rodzianko to Bologoe and tried to instruct the railway workers to stop Rodzianko's train. According to Sukhanov, on the morning of 1 March, the proceedings of the Executive Committee were suddenly interrupted by the intrusion of a certain colonel in field uniform, who appealed to the Executive Committee to end the railway workers' interference with Rodzianko's train. Temporarily suspending the discussion on the agenda, the Executive Committee directed its attention to the question of whether Rodzianko should be permitted to leave the capital to meet the tsar. After a brief discussion it unanimously decided to refuse Rodzianko's departure and to dispatch Skobelev for propaganda work among the railway workers for this purpose.⁵³

Skobelev also confirmed that on 1 March the Petrograd Soviet received the information that a special train was prepared for Rodzianko to travel to Pskov. Skobelev was entrusted to stop the train and he instructed the workers of the Warsaw Station that they should not release the train. The Executive Committee entrusted Chkheidze to inquire about the purpose of the train and the reason why this had been arranged secretly without any consultation with the Petrograd Soviet.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the Executive Committee did not actively exert influence on the dynastic question. According to Skobelev, as long as the

51 The British Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, noted that on 1 March he had a visit from Grand Duke Mikhail, who told him that Rodzianko would go to Bologoe to request that the emperor 'sign the manifesto granting a constitution and entrusting Rodzianko with the selection of a new government'. Buchanan 1923, p. 68.

52 Burdzhakov 1967, p. 347.

53 Sukhanov 1923, pp. 241–8; Skobelev 1927; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 182. Skobelev was insulted by Kerenskii's raising of his voice to reprimand him.

54 Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 181–2. According to this interview, Skobelev was already appointed on 28 February to stop the train in the Warsaw Station. He was clearly mistaken when he identified the anticipated destination of Rodzianko's train as Pskov.

Duma Committee was liquidating autocracy, it preferred to let it decide on this question. 'We ourselves did not undertake any aggressive steps or decisive measures', Skobelev confided later, 'fearing that we might go too far and do too much'.⁵⁵ The Petrograd Soviet leaders were afraid that too much pressure would provoke a military intervention in the revolution. Their judgment was sound, since Alekseev, thinking about the possibility of military intervention, asserted that the Duma Committee was under strong pressure from the left-wing parties.

It is doubtful, therefore, that the Executive Committee's opposition was decisive in delaying and finally cancelling Rodzianko's departure. According to Lomonosov, who actually went to Nikolaevskii Station to personally arrange a train for Rodzianko, neither the railway workers nor the insurgents who had occupied the station had shown any signs of resistance.⁵⁶ Moreover, the Executive Committee reversed their decision later. According to Sukhanov, after the unanimous decision was taken not to permit Rodzianko to leave the capital, Kerenskii burst into the room of the Executive Committee in extreme anger and accused the members of the Executive Committee of playing into the hands of the monarchy, since Rodzianko's mission was to force Nicholas's abdication. As a result of Kerenskii's flamboyant performance, all those present 'gave in to Kerenskii's hysteria', except for three members.⁵⁷ What motivated the Executive Committee to oppose Rodzianko's departure seems to have been the fear that the Duma Committee would negotiate with Nicholas behind the back of the revolutionary insurgents to suppress the revolution militarily. Once this fear was removed, the Executive Committee no longer interfered in the Duma Committee's dealings with the tsar.

The opposition of the Executive Committee, therefore, was never the direct cause of the cancellation of Rodzianko's departure. The real cause should be sought in the struggle within the Duma Committee and the uncertainty of its policy on the dynastic question. Rodzianko's personal diplomacy and his

55 Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 192.

56 Lomonosov 1921, p. 35.

57 Sukhanov 1923, p. 248; Skobelev 1927; Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 179–80; Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 234. It appears strange that Kerenskii, an opponent of Rodzianko's moderate policy, reacted so violently to the Executive Committee's opposition to Rodzianko's departure. Yet Kerenskii's intervention on Rodzianko's behalf appears to have really taken place, since not only Sukhanov but also Skobelev noted the same incident. It is possible to think that Kerenskii resented the interference of the Executive Committee, which might adversely affect the outcome of the power struggle within the Duma Committee, while seeking to block Rodzianko's departure independently of the Executive Committee.

moderate policy met increasing opposition from those who advocated more drastic action favouring Nicholas's abdication. Miliukov noted that by 1 March it became evident that Nicholas could no longer occupy the throne, although the Duma Committee had not yet reached a final decision as to how to force Nicholas to abdicate or what kind of government should be formed after his abdication. Not only the radical members of the Duma Committee such as Kerenskii and Nekrasov, but also Miliukov and Singarev were now in favour of the abdication.⁵⁸ Miliukov noted in his memoirs: 'Rodzianko clearly stalled [*tianul*] and wavered to somehow outwit us in the final account'.⁵⁹

Decision to Seek Nicholas's Abdication

Around 6 o'clock in the morning of 2 March, when eight right wing members were meeting in one of the rooms at the Tauride Palace, Guchkov appeared, and informed his colleagues that his trusted aide, Prince Viazemskii, had been killed by a bullet shot by insurgent soldiers. Guchkov reported that driving around the barracks, the soldiers feared to the extent of panic the attack of the punitive expedition from the old regime sent to restore the old order. This panic had the danger of leading to anarchy. Guchkov argued that in order to remove this fear, soldiers should be freed from the oath of allegiance to the tsar, and for that purpose, the Duma Committee should seek Nicholas II's abdication, as it had decided on 28 February.⁶⁰

This incident convinced even the right-wing members that the only way out of the further spread of soldiers' insurgency against the entire officers would be the abdication of the tsar in favour of his son under Mikhail's regency. When the majority of the Duma Committee members learned of Rodzianko's personal move to seek an audience with the tsar and his secret dealings with the grand dukes in composing a manifesto on the establishment of a responsible ministry, they suspected that he was 'plotting a conspiracy with the military leaders, considering himself dictator of the Russian Revolution'.⁶¹ In addition, the Duma Committee still feared that the high command was still interested

58 According to Skobelev, when the neutrality of the Petropavlovsk Fortress became clear, Miliukov confided to Skobelev: 'It is absolutely clear to me that everything is over for that scoundrel Nicholas'. Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 188.

59 Quoted in Arkhipov 2000, p. 68.

60 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 135–6; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 166.

61 Miliukov 1955, p. 309.

in sending the troops to crush the revolution. Thus, they must have demanded an explanation from Rodzianko about the purpose of his intended rendezvous with the tsar and the contents of the manifesto he was supposed to bring along. Miliukov also feared that Rodzianko's travel either to Dno or to Pskov for direct negotiations with the tsar would most likely result in Nicholas acceding to the formation of a ministry responsible to the Duma and appointing Rodzianko as its head. As discussed later in Chapter 27, Miliukov had to squash such a possibility. Confronted with strong opposition from the majority of the Duma Committee members, Rodzianko could not pursue his independent course of seeking a compromise with the tsar. Moreover, leaving Petrograd in this precarious situation would mean the loss of his authority as a leader of the liberals. To regain his power, he now found it necessary to support the majority opinion: to seek Nicholas's abdication. This led to Rodzianko's important conversation with Ruzskii on the night of 1 March, described below.

When the Duma Committee entered into negotiations with the representatives of the Soviet Executive Committee for the transfer of power on the night of 1–2 March it was no longer Rodzianko but Miliukov who served as the Duma Committee's spokesman. Rodzianko sat through the negotiations without taking any active part in them. On the question of the monarchy, Miliukov stated that the Duma Committee stood for the abdication of Nicholas in favour of his son, Aleksei, under the regency of Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich.⁶² Miliukov would not have presented this position to the Executive Committee representatives without the formal acceptance by the Duma Committee, since almost all members of the Duma Committee were present. After the negotiations, the Duma Committee decided to send immediately two representatives, Guchkov and Shul'gin, not Rodzianko, to Pskov to force this solution on the tsar.⁶³

That the dynastic problem was finally decided in the meeting on 1 March was confirmed by other sources. The French Ambassador Paléologue learned 'just before midnight' that 'the leaders of the liberal parties held a secret conference this evening – in the absence of the socialists and without their knowledge' – and that 'they were of one accord that the monarchy must be retained, but Nicholas II ... must be sacrificed to the salvation of Russia'. Grand Duke Pavel Aleksandrovich, who kept close contact with Rodzianko through N.N. Ivanov, wrote a letter dated 2 March to Kirill Vladimirovich and referred to 'the new

62 See Chapter 21.

63 Deposition of Guchkov, *Padenie 1927*, vol. 6, 262–3; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 136; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 266.

tendency' in the Duma circle 'yesterday evening' to appoint Mikhail as a regent. Disturbed by this 'tendency', Pavel instructed Kirill to get in touch with Rodzianko to try to solve the crisis along the lines outlined in the manifesto signed by the grand dukes.⁶⁴

Guchkov's Conspiracy for a Palace Coup and the Dynastic Question

It is important to note that the dynastic question was closely related to Guchkov's conspiracy for a palace coup. It should be recalled that Guchkov and the Committee of Five (Guchkov, Nekrasov, Tereshchenko, Prince Viazemskii, and Cavalry Captain [*rotmistr*] Kossikovskii) had planned to capture Nicholas II in the village of Krechevitsy near Novgorod, where the Reserve Cavalry Division were stationed. This plot was to be enacted sometime early in March, and two squadrons of the Guards' Reserve Cavalry, about two hundred cavalrymen, arrived in Petrograd during the night of 26–7 February, several hours before the soldiers' insurrection began on 27 February. They were quartered in the barracks of the Guards' Cavalry Regiment between Shpalernaia and Zakhar'evskaia Streets, one block from the Tauride Palace. Then the soldiers uprising broke out.⁶⁵

Throughout 27–8 February the Committee of Five attempted to revive the plot. Before the private meeting of the Duma deputies, Guchkov, Nekrasov and Tereshchenko met with Rodzianko, Miliukov and Shul'gin, and discussed the possibility of establishing a military dictatorship under General Manikovskii, although it is not known that this idea was endorsed by Miliukov, Rodzianko and Shul'gin. Whether or not this palace coup should be intended to force Nicholas to accept a ministry of confidence, a responsible ministry, or his own abdication was not clear, but whatever purposes each harboured, they were not only familiar with the plot but also seemed to support it.⁶⁶

Guchkov's conspiracy had an important component: establishment of a military dictatorship headed by a popular general. Their candidate for the dictator was General Manikovskii, head of the Main Artillery Administration. On the morning of 27 February, most likely before he learned about the outbreak of the

64 Paleologue n.d., vol. 3, p. 233; Romanovy 1927, p. 208; Paley n.d., pp. 55–6.

65 See Chapter 13. Lyandres 2013, pp. 274–5.

66 Lyandres argues that both Rodzianko and Miliukov supported Guchkov's plan for a palace coup. See Lyandres 2013, pp. 283–5. But it is not clear what they intended to do after they captured the tsar.

soldiers' uprising, Tereshchenko walked to see General Manikovskii in the Main Artillery Administration on Liteinyi Prospekt. Although Tereshchenko stated in the interview with Poliektov that he went to the general for ordinary business on matters related to the Central War Industries Committee, other notes kept during the interview that Lyandres examined indicate that he went to see him for 'negotiations' to establish his dictatorship.⁶⁷ During these important negotiations, however, the insurgents broke into the Main Artillery Administration. Tereshchenko barely escaped from the building without knowing what happened to the general, and walked back to the Duma before noon, that is, before the insurgents arrived at the Duma and before the private meeting began.⁶⁸ Guchkov, Nekrasov, Tereshchenko and Viazemskii conferred, but they did not know what happened to the general. There was information that he may have been killed. After many telephone calls to his acquaintances, Tereshchenko finally found that the general was safe and at home on Mokhovaia Street. Pushing everything aside, Guchkov and Tereshchenko walked to his apartment.⁶⁹ Nekrasov in the meantime opened the private meeting, where he proposed the establishment of a military dictatorship under Manikovskii. Nevertheless, the plot to establish a military dictatorship under Manikovskii failed, since the general did not accept the offer, although he did not reject it outright, either. The news of the failure to mobilise Manikovskii must have been relayed to Nekrasov in the Tauride Palace. The final options presented at the private meeting did not include the option of military dictatorship he had proposed at the beginning.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Manikovskii's refusal was only conditional. That was the reason why Nekrasov, who accompanied Rodzianko to the Mariinskii Palace to persuade Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich to assume the regency, revived the idea of a military dictatorship under a popular military leader. Clearly, Nekrasov had General Manikovskii in mind.⁷¹

Throughout the night of 27 February, Tereshchenko was looking for Captain Kossikovskii'. According to Lyandres, the squadrons of the Cavalry Division were patrolling at 8 a.m., that is, before the soldiers' uprising, in the strategically important intersections of Nevskii Prospekt and Sadovaia Street in full military composition. Lyandres also considers it likely that Guchkov, Tereshchenko or

67 Tereshchenko interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 250–7, 265; Lyandres 2013, p. 279.

68 When Tereshchenko arrived at the Duma, he found Guchkov helping Rodzianko to draft his second telegram to the tsar. That was before noon.

69 Tereshchenko interview, Lyandres 2013, 259–60; Lyandres 2013, pp. 280–1.

70 Lyandres 2013, pp. 281–2.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 282.

Viazemskii may have encountered Kossikovskii or officers of the 9th squadron under his command.⁷²

Another important fact that Lyandres brings up is that the squadrons of the Cavalry Division were ordered to return to Krechevitsy on the morning of 28 February. But instead of returning to Krechevitsy, they stopped at Chudovo and stayed there. Chudovo was located in between Liuban' and Malaia Vishera. The Military Commission received the information at 2–3 a.m. on 28 February that the imperial trains had left Mogilev, and that at the same time Tatishchev's train had left Tsarskoe Selo, although it did not know if the imperial family was in that train. Around 3 a.m. on 1 March the Duma Committee learned that the imperial train had reached Malaia Vishera, and it ordered the railway authorities in Malaia Vishera to turn the imperial trains back to Bologoe. It also instructed the authorities at the Tosno Station to detain, and then turn back Tatishchev's train to Tsarskoe Selo. The significance of Kossikovskii's squadron of the Cavalry Division staying in Chudovo was obvious. Had the emperor and his entourage defied the obstructions of the railway authorities, and decided to go straight to Tosno and change their directions to Tsarskoe Selo, they would have encountered Kossikovskii's Cavalry squadron. They would have implemented Guchkov's plot to capture the emperor as prisoner of the Duma Committee.⁷³

Shift in Political Power in the Duma Committee and the Dynastic Question

The shift of the Duma Committee's policy on the dynastic question was accompanied by the shift of political strength of the chief contenders for power within the Duma Committee. During the two days from 28 February to 1 March, Rodzianko's influence declined considerably. Rodzianko's order, which had provoked a violent reaction from the radical workers and the insurgent soldiers, immensely damaged his prestige. Steklov told Engel'gardt: 'Drop Rodzianko, otherwise, they will start criticising us'.⁷⁴ On the other hand, Miliukov's star was rising and Kerenskii's prestige soaring. It was Miliukov who had set out to make up the list of the members of the Provisional Government, from which Rodzianko's name was conspicuously dropped. Zaslavskii and Kantorovich noted:

⁷² Ibid, pp. 275–6.

⁷³ Lyandres 2013, p. 278.

⁷⁴ Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvshii mir', OR GLB, f. 218. l. 117.

The Octobrist [Rodzianko] who created the Duma Committee was eliminated from power in the first two days, and Miliukov, who had been in Rodzianko's shadow on the 27th, became on the 28th the unquestionable leader, and already, on 1 March, had bid farewell to Rodzianko without regret.⁷⁵

On the evening of 1 March, Kerenskii told Skobelev that during the discussions on the formation of the Provisional Government, Kerenskii, Nekrasov and Konovalov – the Masonic trio – had declared that they considered Rodzianko unacceptable as the prime minister of the Provisional Government.⁷⁶

Rodzianko tried to regain his authority by presenting the formation of a responsible ministry under his premiership as an established fact through his personal negotiations with Nicholas. However, his opponents moved more quickly. His intrigues with the military leaders and the tsar were suspected as a conspiracy to establish a dictatorship under his leadership. It backfired and invited a rebellion of the other members of the Duma Committee who favoured Nicholas's abdication. Thus, when the draft manifesto signed by the grand dukes was brought back to the Duma Committee by N.N. Ivanov, it was not for its 'approval', as Ivanov stated, but for what was tantamount to its confiscation. It was not brought to Rodzianko, but to Miliukov, the foremost critic of Rodzianko. It is no wonder that Rodzianko looked 'crushed'.

Rodzianko-Ruzskii Conversation through the Hughes Apparatus

Shortly after the negotiations with the Soviet Executive Committee concerning the transfer of power were over, Rodzianko began the historic communications on the Hughes apparatus with General Ruzskii – the communications that became the immediate cause for the abdication of Nicholas II – that began at 3:30 a.m. on March 2.⁷⁷ Rodzianko began by explaining why he could not fulfil his promise to meet the tsar at Dno and later at Pskov.

Frankly speaking, there are two reasons why I did not go: in the first place, the troops you dispatched mutinied, ran out of the train at Luga, declared that they were going to associate themselves with the State Duma, and

⁷⁵ Zaslavskii/Kantorovich 1924, p. 38.

⁷⁶ Skobelev interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 187–8.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 25.

decided to take the weapons and not to let anybody pass, not even the imperial trains. Immediately, I took measures so that the track for the train of His Majesty could be freed, but I do not know if I shall succeed or not.

The second reason is that I received the information that my leaving the capital would cause an undesirable result. It was impossible to leave the pent-up anger of the people without my presence, because at that time they believed me and carried out only my instructions.⁷⁸

Rodzianko's explanation revealed the political predicament in which he found himself rather than the real reasons for his failure to keep the appointment. Luga was on the line between Petrograd and Pskov, not between Petrograd and Dno. Therefore, 'the mutiny at Luga' might have been an excuse for his failure to travel to Pskov, but it did not explain why he failed to go to Dno. Actually, the troops sent from the northern front never mutinied at Luga.⁷⁹ Rodzianko may well not have had any knowledge of this fact. Even if he had known that, however, Rodzianko himself admitted that the mutineers supported the Duma. Assuming that his claim to his great popularity among the populace was correct, one wonders why they would hinder Rodzianko's train. In fact, when Guchkov and Shul'gin travelled to Pskov through Luga on 2 March, they encountered no resistance. Moreover, Rodzianko was familiar with the efforts by Bublikov and Lomonosov to manipulate the movement of the imperial trains. Therefore, his first explanation was not only irrelevant but also deceitful.

Rodzianko does not fare well in the second explanation, either. The reaction of the masses, particularly of the insurgent soldiers, to Rodzianko's order clearly demonstrated that the authority among the masses he claimed in this statement did not exist. To say that the people 'believed in me and carried out only my instructions' reflected his wishful thinking more than it did reality.

The importance of Rodzianko's statement lay not in how he concealed the truth from Ruzskii but in why he told him a lie in the first place. As Katkov persuasively argues, Rodzianko was in a difficult plight. On the one hand, he had deeply committed himself to seek a compromise with the tsar, a policy for which he had succeeded in mobilising the support of the high command. As we shall see in the next chapters, it was partly because of Rodzianko's persuasion that the high command agreed to induce the tsar to grant the

78 Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a, pp. 55–6; Telegrammy 1922, p. 128.; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 92.

79 See Chapter 25.

political concession prescribed by Rodzianko's project. Therefore, to go to Pskov to demand Nicholas's abdication would be out of the question, since he did not know how the high command would react to the new demand. It would inevitably damage his reputation with the military leaders, whom he could not afford to antagonise, since the military was the only support he had in his effort to regain political influence.

On the other hand, he could not go to Pskov to present the old demand for the establishment of a responsible ministry, either, since this would be regarded by his colleagues in the Duma Committees as a conspiracy behind their backs. If he were alienated from his Duma colleagues, no matter what support he might receive from military leaders, he would not be able to even begin the constitutional experiment. Either way, he would not gain anything from the trip to Dno or to Pskov. Thus, as Katkov states brilliantly, Rodzianko 'thought it preferable to wait and see how matters would develop in Pskov after the meeting between the emperor and Ruzskii, and then try to persuade the army commanders that an immediate abdication was both desirable and necessary'.⁸⁰ Rodzianko's conversation with Ruzskii was a desperate manoeuvre to escape from this predicament and to stay alive in the power struggle in the Duma Committee without alienating either the high command or his colleagues.

In this conversation Rodzianko presented the Duma as the centre of power, and suggested that the emperor should transfer a part of the supreme power to the State Duma. The chairman of the Duma may not have expected Nicholas II to agree to his own abdication, but he may have hoped that the emperor might agree with the establishment of a responsible ministry. In that case, Rodzianko may have expected that he be given the power to form a cabinet under his chairmanship. It is possible, thus, that Rodzianko would still keep the possibility of retaining his power within the Duma Committee.

Yet it was this personal manoeuvre that touched off a train of reactions that ultimately led to the end of the monarchical system.

80 Katkov 1967, p. 320.

The Stavka and Counterrevolutionary Attempts

The Stavka Determined to Suppress the Revolution by Force

It is not known exactly when, but at least by the evening of 27 February, the Stavka made a decision to send an expeditionary force to suppress the revolution in Petrograd. According to Cherniaev, General Alekseev told the emperor at lunch about the abortive revolt of the Pavlovskii Regiment. This triggered the emperor's decision to send the punitive detachments led by General N.I. Ivanov, and Alekseev endorsed this decision.¹ When General Khabalov brought the first news of the soldiers' uprising in Petrograd in the early afternoon on 27 February to the Stavka and requested an immediate dispatch of troops from the front, Nicholas either reinforced his previous decision, or if he had not made up his mind, he quickly reacted by appointing an 'energetic person' to deal with the crisis – the appointment itself, he believed, would be sufficient to quell the localised unrest.² Early in the evening the Stavka learned of the alarming situation in Petrograd from the two telegrams dispatched by War Minister Beliaev. His first (No. 197) reported that the insurrection had spread to many army units, and urged Alekseev to send from the front immediately 'truly reliable units in substantial numbers'. The second telegram (No. 198), which immediately followed the first, reported that the Council of Ministers had now declared Petrograd to be in a state of siege, while in view of General Khabalov's confusion, Beliaev was compelled to appoint General Zankevich to assist the commander of the Petrograd Military District.³ Realising for the first time the seriousness of the uprising in Petrograd, General Alekseev fully supported Nicholas's decision to suppress the insurrection by force. After supper, Nicholas summoned General N.I. Ivanov, and appointed him commander of the Petrograd Military district to replace Khabalov. Alekseev for his part immediately made arrangements to dispatch counterrevolutionary forces to Petrograd by making available three companies of the St. George Battalion to accompany General Ivanov and further by ordering the commanders of the

1 Cherniaev 1989, p. 165. See Chapter 22.

2 Perepiska 1923, p. 213.

3 Beliaev to Alekseev, nos. 197, 198, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 9; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 83.

northern and the western fronts to send reinforcements to support Ivanov's companies.⁴

General Ivanov, a stocky old man of 66 years of age with a massive beard, was a strict disciplinarian, but his paternalistic attitude and the unpretentious simplicity with which he treated soldiers made him well liked by his men. During the Russo-Japanese War, he was assigned to the Siberian Army in Manchuria. In 1907 he had mercilessly suppressed the rising of the sailors in Kronstadt. In 1915 he became a commander of the southwestern front, and at this post he made a scathing attack on the military bureaucracy in Petrograd for its incompetency in producing war supplies. Directly responsible for the Great Retreat in 1915, he was later relieved of his post, replaced by General Brusilov, and had worked in a sinecure at Mogilev. Ivanov and Alekseev, who were never close to begin with, were no longer on speaking terms. Ivanov confided to his closest friends that he had been dismissed because of Alekseev's intrigue.⁵ Despite the animosity between the two men, they shared the view that a political concession would have to accompany military suppression of the revolution.

After he retired from the audience with the tsar, Ivanov discussed with Alekseev the technical details of the punitive expedition. Alekseev granted the general extraordinary power to enforce martial law by overriding civil authority.⁶ At 2 a.m. on 28 February, shortly before the emperor's departure from Mogilev, Ivanov was summoned again to the tsar's car in the imperial train. Apparently not satisfied with the power granted by Alekseev, the general requested that he be given absolute power over four ministries: internal affairs, agriculture, trade and industry, and transport. Nicholas went far beyond his request and granted him dictatorial power over all ministers. At the same time Ivanov recommended that, since military means alone would not solve the crisis, a political concession in the form of a ministry of confidence be granted.⁷ To this Nicholas replied: 'Yes, yes. General Alekseev just mentioned it'. Ivanov had a distinct impression that the tsar had made up his mind to make this concession. Nicholas, however, took no such action and continued to reject all suggestions of political concessions. According to Ivanov's testimony before the Extraordinary Investigation Commission, at his last audience with the tsar, he had told Nicholas that he did not intend to bring troops into Petrograd since he wanted to avoid bloodshed. The emperor answered, 'Yes,

4 Ioffe 1987, p. 61.

5 Martynov 1927, pp. 130–1; Kulikov 2014b, pp. 358–9.

6 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, ll. 1–2; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, l. 130.

7 Ivanov's deposition, Padenie 1926, vol. 5, pp. 317–18; Blok 1922, p. 40; Proval 1962, p. 104; Dubenskii 1922, pp. 30–1; Basily 1973, pp. 108–9.

of course'.⁸ This testimony should be taken with a grain of salt: it is contradicted by Ivanov's determination to assume a dictatorship in Petrograd. The possibility of bloodshed was from the beginning inherent in undertaking the expedition.⁹

Examination of the Stavka's policy also indicates that Ivanov's expedition was conceived as an extremely serious endeavour in which the military leaders clearly meant to use the most reliable forces available against the insurgents in the capital. As discussed in the preceding chapter, General Alekseev favoured a political solution to the crisis and was understandably reluctant to commit forces from the front for the suppression of an internal disorder, particularly when the scheduled spring offensive was approaching. Moreover, he was not at all sure of the morale of the soldiers, who would be ordered to fire, not upon the enemy, but upon their fellow countrymen. Despite this reluctance, however, Alekseev fully endorsed Nicholas's decision for a counterrevolutionary offensive. As soon as he realised the seriousness of the insurrection in Petrograd, he made arrangements to dispatch reliable troops to suppress the revolution by force and to secure the normal function of the railways.

By the evening of 27 February Alekseev had taken measures to move sizable troops from the front. In his conversation with General Danilov, chief of staff of the northern front, Alekseev instructed the northern front to dispatch two infantry regiments, two cavalry regiments selected from the 'strongest and most reliable units', and commanded by the 'strongest generals, because apparently Khabalov lost his head, and it is necessary to have reliable, capable, and bold assistants at the disposal of General Ivanov'. He further stated:

The situation demands the immediate arrival of troops ... It is a threatening moment, and it is necessary to do everything to speed up the dispatch of strong troops. The problem of our future depends on this.

In addition to these four regiments, the northern front was instructed to send one machine-gun detachment and two artillery batteries. Presumably at the same time Alekseev also ordered the western front to send troops to Petrograd

8 Ivanov's deposition, *Padenie* 1926, vol. 5, p. 318; Proval 1962, p. 104. Mel'gunov and Katkov, and most recently, Kulikov, take this as the evidence to show that Nicholas and Ivanov intended to avoid bloodshed. Mel'gunov 1961, p. 159; Katkov 1967, pp. 308–9; Kulikov 2014b, pp. 344–5. For the counterargument, see Ioffe 1987, pp. 61–2.

9 Kulikov takes Ivanov's words at face value, and argues that Ivanov had no intention to bring the troops to Petrograd. Kulikov 2014b, p. 359.

in similar numbers.¹⁰ Thus, the size of the forces initially made available to Ivanov consisted of three companies of the St. George Battalion, four infantry regiments, four cavalry regiments, two machine-gun detachments and four artillery batteries. Contrary to Katkov's contention, this was a formidable force. The Stavka further instructed the main administration of the General Staff in Petrograd to form a staff for Ivanov's forces and made arrangements to install a field radio station between Orsha and Tsarskoe Selo to coordinate information and activities of Ivanov's forces, the northern front, the western front and the Stavka.¹¹

In the small hours of 28 February, the Stavka learned that the situation in Petrograd had changed from bad to worse. Khabalov admitted that he could no longer discharge the obligation to 'restore order' and revealed that 'by evening the rebels occupied a large part of the capital'. Shortly before two o'clock in the morning the Stavka was informed by Beliaev that insurgents had occupied Mariinskii Palace and that the ministers 'just in time fled from the palace'. As if to bolster the morale of the loyal troops in Petrograd, Alekseev informed Golitsyn of Ivanov's appointment and of the dispatch of counterrevolutionary troops from the front. At the same time, he ordered the northern and western fronts to add one infantry and one cavalry battery each to the reinforcements.¹²

Around 8:30 a.m. another telegram from Khabalov arrived at Mogilev, reporting that the number of loyal troops had shrunk to 600 infantry and 500 cavalry, with 15 machine guns, 12 guns, and 80 cartridges. Khabalov commented, with astonishing understatement, 'the situation is extremely difficult'.¹³ Urgent measures were necessary to prevent further deterioration of the situation until the arrival of Ivanov's troops. For this purpose Alekseev ordered Ruzskii to send the 'most reliable battalion' of the Vyborg Fortress Artillery. Also the 'two most reliable battalions' of the Kronstadt Fortress Artillery were ordered to march to Petrograd immediately. At 11:30 a.m. the situation became even more hopeless. The Stavka was informed that the rebels 'had occupied the most important institutions in all parts of the city', and the 'normal life of the government

10 Alekseev–Danilov conversation and Evert to Alekseev, no. 6144, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, pp. 9–10, 17; Boldyrev 1927, p. 251; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, l. 130.

11 Alekseev to Beliaev, no. 1789, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, pp. 10–11; Lukomskii to Lebedev, no. 1817, *ibid.*, p. 28; Document 78, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 208.

12 Khabalov to Alekseev, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, pp. 15–16; Beliaev to Voeikov, no. 200, *ibid.*, p. 16; Alekseev to Ruzskii and Evert, no. 1805, *ibid.*, p. 17.

13 Khabalov to Alekseev, no. 415, *ibid.*, p. 19.

had stopped'.¹⁴ Approximately at the same time Khabalov's response to a ten-point questionnaire from General Ivanov also reached Mogilev. According to this information, only a small number of troops remained at Khabalov's disposal; the revolutionaries had taken all railway stations as well as all artillery and munitions administrations and factories into their hands, and had arrested the ministers; no food supply was available to Khabalov, who had lost contact with all technical and economic institutions connected with military operations. Finally, after two o'clock in the afternoon, the Stavka received news that the loyal troops had completely disintegrated. The soldiers, who remained loyal to the last moment, surrendered arms on the orders of their commanders and quietly returned to their barracks. This news strengthened even more Alekseev's resolve to crush the rebellion. He ordered Ruzskii and Evert to send additional reinforcements and requested General Brusilov, commander of the southwestern front, to prepare three guard battalions for possible use by Ivanov.¹⁵

The Stavka's determination to quell the revolution by force was indeed a serious one. Each time it received information that the situation was worsening in Petrograd, it stepped up military commitment to the counterrevolutionary attempt. This response emanated from the belief that Petrograd had fallen into the hands of irresponsible, anarchical masses, influenced by left-wing elements – an alarming situation that, if allowed to develop further, would inevitably undermine the integrity of the army and seriously hamper military operations at the front. The Stavka was given to understand that no forces were at work to restore peace and order. Even worse, there were some indications that radical left-wing elements were forming a revolutionary government.¹⁶ In his circular telegram to all the commanders outlining the situation in Petrograd, Alekseev stated this fear:

In the State Duma a Soviet of leaders of the parties was formed for [establishing] relations with institutions and persons, and additional elections from the workers and the rebel troops have been called for.¹⁷

14 Alekseev to Ruzskii, no. 1807, Alekseev to Grigorovich, no. 1809, *ibid.*; Beliaev to Alekseev, no. 201, *ibid.*, p. 20.

15 Khabalov to Alekseev, *ibid.*, pp. 20–1; Beliaev to Alekseev, no. 9157, *ibid.*, p. 27; Alekseev to Ruzskii and Evert, no. 1819, Alekseev to Brusilov, no. 1912, *ibid.*, p. 24.

16 Kapnist to Rasin, no. 2704; *ibid.*, pp. 14–15, Direct conversation between the Naval Staff at the Stavka and the main Naval Staff in Petrograd, *ibid.*, p. 29.

17 Alekseev's circular telegram, no. 1813, *ibid.*, p. 24; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 89.

Actually, the proclamation for 'the establishment of relations with institutions and persons' was issued by the Duma Committee, not by the Soviet. Alekseev's telegram shows that in his mind these two were not as yet distinguished. The gap between Alekseev's understanding of the situation in Petrograd and the actual situation began to influence the process of the revolution. This gap also gave Rodzianko the chance to manipulate the information for his own political purposes.

In addition to sending troops to Petrograd, the Stavka was extremely concerned about the security of the railways. Katkov states that it was one of Alekseev's gravest mistakes to have the Duma Committee control the railway movement, thereby surrendering 'an important instrument of power, which he could well have used to influence the political issue at that critical juncture'.¹⁸ The Stavka, however, never conceived control of the railways as a political instrument, but solely as a means of transporting troops, food supplies and war materiel. From its standpoint it mattered little who controlled the railways, as long as normal functioning was guaranteed. At midday on 28 February, when the Stavka learned of the paralysis of the government in Petrograd, Alekseev inquired of Beliaev about the fate of the minister of transport, Kriger-Voinovskii, and asked the war minister if in the present situation it might be advisable to transfer control of the railways to the deputy minister of transport, General V.N. Kisliakov, who was in charge of railways in the theatre of war. On hearing Beliaev's answer that the transfer should be done as quickly as possible, Alekseev decided that he would assume the entire responsibility for railway movement through Kisliakov.¹⁹ But this was easier said than done. Kisliakov himself pointed out the impossibility of this measure. His operation was part and parcel of the entire operation of the ministry of transport, and it would be totally impossible to schedule the entire railway network anew, independent of the railway administration in Petrograd. He justifiably recommended that the Stavka's decision to assume the responsibility for the railway should be postponed until serious disruptions actually did take place. In the meantime, operations of the ministry of transport were taken over by the Duma Committee's new commissar, Bublikov. Although Kisliakov has been maligned by monarchists for having joined the intrigues of the Duma Committee, his action was in concert with the goal of the Stavka.²⁰

18 Katkov 1967, p. 316.

19 Alekseev to Beliaev, no. 1811; Lukomskii to Kisliakov, no. 1818, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, pp. 25–6.

20 Kisliakov to Lukomskii, no. 1, *ibid.*, p. 26; Spiridovich 1962, vol. 3, pp. 240–2; Katkov 1967

Without reliable forces to enforce his decision, Kisliakov could not have resisted the Duma Committee's takeover. Detaching his operation to set up a completely new system of railway control would have been an impossible endeavour, and even if he had succeeded, it would have irreparably disrupted normal functioning of the railways – the situation that he and the Stavka tried to avoid at all cost. Thus, Kisliakov chose the best course of action available under the circumstances and continued to work under Bublikov to ensure that railway movement would proceed as usual. This does not exclude, however, the possibility that Kisliakov's sympathy lay with the Duma Committee.

General Ivanov's Counterrevolutionary Expedition

In the meantime, General Ivanov was organising his expedition. Before his departure from Mogilev, Ivanov instructed Ruzskii and Evert to assemble the reinforcements from the northern front at Aleksandrovskaiia, near Tsarskoe Selo, and those from the western front at Tsarskoe Selo, where he was scheduled to arrive around eight o'clock on the morning of 1 March.²¹ The first reinforcements from the northern front were expected to arrive at Aleksandrovskaiia late on the night of 28 February and 1 March, and the last troops from the western front not earlier than 2 March.²² To acquaint himself with the situation in Petrograd, he attempted to talk with Khabalov directly, but the latter was unable to come to the Hughes apparatus at the Admiralty. Ivanov then sent the ten-point questionnaire and received Khabalov's answer at 11:30 on the morning of 28 February, an answer that revealed a situation far worse than he had expected.²³ Ivanov concluded that suppression of the revolution would not be achieved quickly and that he had no choice but to wait for the massive reinforcements before initiating military action against Petrograd.

The St. George Battalion left Mogilev at eleven o'clock on the morning of 28 February, and General Ivanov himself two hours later. Ivanov's delay in leav-

p. 315. Kulikov supports the view that Alekseev made a mistake not to take control of the railway. Kulikov 2014b, pp. 361–2.

21 Ivanov to Ruzskii, no. 2, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 21; Ivanov to Evert, no. 1, *ibid.* At the same time Ivanov ordered the commandant of Tsarskoe Selo to billet 13 battalions, 16 squadrons and 4 artillery batteries. GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, l. 14; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, l. 127.

22 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, l. 18.

23 For Ivanov's attempt to talk directly with Khabalov and his subsequent telegram with the ten-point questionnaire, see GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, ll. 9–13; Khabalov to Alekseev, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 20.

ing Mogilev has often been taken as evidence to prove his lack of seriousness in his counterrevolutionary attempt.²⁴ Considering the slowness with which the reinforcements were scheduled to assemble in Tsarskoe Selo, however, there actually was no need for Ivanov to leave earlier. His special train caught up with the advancing battalion at Orsha. His force proceeded along the Vindavskii Line with no trouble, and arrived at Dno, approximately one hundred and thirty miles from Tsarskoe Selo, around seven o'clock on the morning of 1 March – at about the same time that the imperial trains were approaching Bologoe to change their direction to Pskov. However, from Dno Ivanov's troops proceeded at an excruciatingly slow speed. It took eleven hours to travel from Dno to Vyritsa, some one hundred and ten miles. By the time they arrived at Vyritsa, twenty miles south of Tsarskoe Selo, it was already six o'clock in the evening.²⁵

The stationmaster of Vyritsa refused to let Ivanov's trains go further. When Ivanov threatened force, however, the stationmaster easily capitulated and made arrangements to let the trains proceed.²⁶ When Ivanov and his troops finally arrived at Tsarskoe Selo at nine o'clock in the evening, the situation was the following: Nicholas had already arrived at Pskov; the Tarutin Company of the 67th Infantry Regiment sent from the northern front had arrived at Aleksandrovskaia, and the first echelon of the Borodin Company of the same infantry regiment had reached Luga. The rest of the reinforcements were on the way as scheduled.

On the afternoon on 1 March, Kerenskii received an intercepted telegram sent from Major-General M.N. Bakhrushev of the Chief of Staff of the 5th Army of the northern front in Dvinsk to Major-General A.E. Listovskii, commander of the 67th Tarutin Infantry Division, whose unit had already arrived at Aleksandrovskaia. Bakhrushev informed Listovskii that an independent machine gun command would be subordinated to his unit, which had been designated to the St. George Battalion, and that further instructions would be given by General Ivanov, who was due to arrive at 8 p.m. 1 March at Tsarskoe Selo.²⁷ The punitive expedition was moving as planned, though slowly.

It is often argued that Ivanov's safe arrival at Tsarskoe Selo was possible only with the connivance of the Duma Committee, which wished to use Ivanov's

24 For instance, Lukomskii 1922 vol. 1, p. 125; Mel'gunov 1961, p. 94.

25 Ivanov's deposition, *Padenie* 1926, vol. 5, p. 321.

26 Lomonosov 1921 p. 40.

27 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 125–6; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 255.

forces to suppress the revolution in Petrograd.²⁸ When the Duma Committee first learned of the dispatch of the counterrevolutionary forces late on the evening of 27 February, there was great apprehension, even panic, among its members. The Duma Committee had already taken decisive steps to support the revolution against the old regime, and was determined to prevent the military suppression of the revolution. Bublikov gave the railway authorities instructions to hinder and obstruct any military train coming within 250 versts of Petrograd.²⁹ This was why Ivanov's trains moved so slowly after they passed Dno. But at Vyritsa, when Ivanov was determined to proceed to Tsarskoe Selo, if necessary with the use of force, Bublikov had no choice but to let him go. But this decision was made against Bublikov's wish. Despite some Soviet-era historians' contention, it did not represent 'the Duma Committee's tacit approval' of Ivanov's forces. The Duma Committee's opposition to Ivanov's forces can also be confirmed by Grekov's order to hinder the movement of troops to Petrograd.³⁰

The Duma Committee Sends Domanevskii to Negotiate with Ivanov

As soon as Ivanov arrived at Tsarskoe Selo Station, the assistant commandant of the palace, P.P. Groten, and the Tsarskoe Selo police chief, Osipov, greeted him. But the news that they brought was not pleasant: they reported that the Tsarskoe Selo Garrison had taken the side of the Duma, although the palace itself was protected by loyal troops. Ivanov immediately issued an order: he announced his position as dictator of the Petrograd Military District, that all citizens, military personnel and clergy were to subordinate themselves to Ivanov. He took measures to assemble all troops in the headquarters he established in Tsarskoe Selo.³¹ This bold stand, however, was not destined to continue very long. Soon Colonel V.N. Domanevskii and Lieutenant Colonel A.A. Tilli arrived at the station. They had been dispatched by General Zankevich, chief of the main administration of the General Staff in Petrograd.

Soviet-era historians claim that the Domanevskii mission was engineered by the Duma Committee for negotiations with Ivanov to utilise Ivanov's troops for

28 Chamberlin 1935, vol. 1, p. 86; Martynov 1927, p. 146. This is the accepted opinion of Soviet-era historians. See Diakin 1967, p. 345; E.D. Chermenski 1976, p. 297.

29 Bublikov 1918, p. 40.

30 Lukomskii-Kvetsinskii conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 33.

31 Ivanov's deposition, *Padenie* 1926, vol. 5, pp., 321–2; GARF, f. 6, op. 1, d. 1722, l. 1, Spiridovich 1962, vol. 3, p. 221.

suppression of the revolution. Actually, it originated from Alekseev's instruction to Zankevich to create a staff for Ivanov from the main administration of the General Staff.³² Until the previous day Zankevich had assumed the hopeless task of commanding loyal troops against the insurgents. After their disintegration, he returned to the General Staff. In the meantime, Engel'gardt and Guchkov succeeded in recruiting some officers from the General Staff for the work of the Duma Committee's Military Commission.³³ This development, coupled with his unsuccessful, frustrating experience of trying to organise the loyal troops against the insurgents, must have convinced Zankevich of the necessity of reaching a compromise with the Duma Committee. This opinion was widely shared by officers in the General Staff in Petrograd.

Late on the night of 28 February, Domanevskii went to the Tauride Palace to tell Engel'gardt that he had been appointed chief of staff for Ivanov's forces. To Engel'gardt the aim of Ivanov's mission was clear: 'Ivanov went to Petrograd to restore tsarist power. In this relation my lot was cast: I openly acted against the tsar and no excuse nor any agreement could be possible here'. But he said to Domanevskii,

Ivanov could also, on the other hand, help to contain the revolution within those limits that seemed at that time acceptable. We could become allies and co-workers only on that basis. However, for the agreement it was necessary to obtain a concession from Ivanov. He must recognise the accomplished fact, recognise the legal power of the Provisional Committee of the State Duma.

Engel'gardt's point was understood by Domanevskii and 'he even allowed a possibility of agreement on the part of Ivanov'. But Domanevskii expressed doubt that restoring tsarist power and imposing order could be separated in the minds of the soldiers. In general 'faith in the success of Ivanov's mission did not exist in him'.³⁴

Engel'gardt's statement should not be taken as the Duma Committee's intention to turn Ivanov's troops against the revolution, as Soviet-era historians would have us believe. At that time, although the Military Commission made

32 Martynov 1927, p. 147; Genkina 1927, vol. 1, p. 75; Diakin 1967, p. 345, Chernenksnii 1976, p. 297; Alekseev to Beliaev, no. 1789, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 11. For the argument criticising this view, Ioffe 1987, p. 65.

33 GARF, f. 6, op. 1, d. 1722, l. 26. Also see Chapter 9.

34 Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvshii mir: Vospominaniia', *OR RNB*, f. 218, l. 112.

contact with some officers of the General Staff, it did not know the over-all attitude of the General Staff toward the revolution. After all, it was part of the military machinery that was committed to counterrevolution. Since the General Staff continued to maintain constant contact with the Stavka, it was necessary for the Duma Committee to present itself as a champion of law and order to persuade the military to reverse its plan for counterrevolution. On the other hand, General Staff officers wanted to avoid the appearance of officially recognising the Duma Committee, which accepted the revolution, as long as they were under the Stavka's order to cooperate with Ivanov's counterrevolutionary expedition. The Domanevskii–Engel'gardt conversation was, therefore, delicate diplomatic negotiation, during which the true intentions of both sides were camouflaged in carefully worded opinions. But at the end both understood the wishes of the other side. Ivanov's counterrevolutionary offensive should be stopped and peaceful settlement with the Duma Committee should be sought as the only available means to solve the crisis. It should be stressed that the intention of the Military Commission was from the very beginning clear: to stop Ivanov's punitive expedition. A short outline of the activities of the Military Commission, written after the February Revolution, listed one activity as 'the organisation of the efforts against the echelons dispatched from the army under the command of General Ivanov for the struggle with the revolution'.³⁵

Having secured tacit approval from the Duma Committee for the course of action they intended to take as well as the guarantee of the safe passage to Tsarskoe Selo, Domanevskii and Tilli went to Tsarskoe Selo to meet General Ivanov.³⁶ In the name of the chief of the General Staff, Domanevskii reported to Ivanov that all troops as well as officers in Petrograd had fallen under the influence of the provisional government formed by the Duma. The provisional government was making efforts to restore order, and 'the reserve battalions support only the orders issued by the provisional government'.³⁷ Some members of the ministry were arrested, Domanevskii continued, but most of the ministries, the war ministry, for instance, continued to function only in agreement with the 'provisional government'. In Domanevskii's opinion, 'it is difficult to restore order by force in the armed struggle against the insurgents and the provisional government'. Armed intervention would require an enormous

35 GARF, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 19, l. 4.

36 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, l. 24.

37 Although Domanevskii used the term 'provisional government', he must have meant the Duma Committee, since the provisional government had not been formed until 2 March.

number of troops, and it would encounter difficulties in provisioning, billeting and transportation – tasks that could not be carried out without the cooperation of the provisional government. Aside from these practical difficulties, Domanevskii also presented political considerations. There were two points of view among the insurgents: one group, which swore allegiance to the ‘provisional government’, remained faithful to the monarchical principle, wished only limited internal reforms, and intended to eradicate disorder as quickly as possible in order to continue the war. But the other group, which supported the Petrograd Soviet, was willing to overthrow the existing state structure and to end the war. ‘Until 1 March the prestige of the Duma government stood high and in fact it looked like the master of the situation, at least in the capital’, Domanevskii continued, ‘But it is clear that with each day the situation of the Duma government, which is not supported by law, is getting more difficult and that there is an increasing possibility that power could go to the extreme left’. All this would lead to the conclusion that ‘at the present moment an armed struggle would only complicate and worsen the situation’, and therefore the agreement with the Duma was ‘the only means to restore order’. It is not clear what effect this report had on Ivanov’s mind, although his subsequent testimony indicates that he did not seem to attach much importance to Domanevskii’s recommendation.³⁸

The Revolution Engulfs the Tsarskoe Selo Garrison

After he heard Domanevskii’s report, Ivanov was summoned by the empress to the palace. By this time the revolution had spread to Tsarskoe Selo. On 27 February everything was quiet in Tsarskoe Selo, but at 10 o’clock in the evening Beliaev informed Groten that a revolution had broken out in the capital, and recommended that since the empress was in danger, she and her family should immediately leave the palace. Groten immediately relayed this news to Voeikov in Mogilev and asked for the tsar’s advice. Nicholas replied that his family should stay in Tsarskoe Selo, and he would join them on 1 March, apparently without realising that his advice would eventually cost the lives of his family.³⁹

The next day, on 28 February, Princess Paley, Grand Duke Pavel Aleksandrovich’s wife, woke up in the morning. ‘Then I glanced out of the window: a

38 Ibid., l. 29; Deposition of Ivanov, *Padenie* 1926, vol. 5, p. 323.

39 Benckendorff 1927, pp. 2–3.

pure blue sky, the snow sparkling and scintillating in the sun's rays, not a sound to disturb the calm of nature'.⁴⁰ But this was not to last long. Count Apraksin walked all the way from Petrograd to Tsarskoe Selo on foot, and arrived at the palace in the morning to tell the empress that the revolution had taken over the capital. Apraksin and Benckendorff, grand marshal of the court, met the empress at 10 o'clock in the morning and advised her to leave the palace. Before this meeting Alexandra had entertained the notion of leaving for Gatchina, and ordered Gilliard, Aleksei's French tutor, to prepare a train. But she quickly changed her mind. She told Benckendorff and Apraksin that 'in no case would she consent to leave by herself, and that owing to the state of her children's health, especially that of the Heir Apparent, departure with them was completely out of the question'. She decided to stay and wait for the arrival of the Emperor.⁴¹

The commanders of the Tsarskoe Garrison asked Nicholas's uncle, Grand Duke Pavel Aleksandrovich, how they should react in case of disturbances. The grand duke replied that the tsar would return to Tsarskoe Selo on the following day, and he was convinced that he would grant a responsible ministry, 'only it may be too late'. Nevertheless, the grand duke said that 'the Heir and the Empress are in Tsarskoe Selo, and our duty is to protect them'. But the soldiers did not want to wait until the tsar's arrival and the gift of a responsible ministry that he was supposed to grant on arrival. The afternoon was quiet, but many cars carrying soldiers arrived from Petrograd.

The soldiers of the reserve battalion of the First Guard Regiment, and then the heavy artillery division and other units defected. Two thousand sailors of the Guard's ship, which had been brought in from the front only ten days before, abandoned their posts and marched twelve miles to Petrograd.

By the evening of 28 February, revolution had finally begun in Tsarskoe Selo. Soldiers broke out of the barracks. Armed with rifles, and singing revolutionary songs, insurgents attacked prisons, pillaged stores, and marched toward the palace. But the imperial palace was heavily guarded by loyal troops: two battalions of His Majesty's personal regiment, one battalion of the guard regiment, 1,200 strong, two squadrons of the Cossacks of the Emperor's escort, one company of the First Railway Regiment, and one heavy artillery battery. The troops were under the command of General Groten. The insurgents approached the guarded enclosure of the palace, and then withdrew, but never launched a serious attack. The loyal troops spent the night awaiting an attack, but nothing

40 Paley n.d. pp. 48–9.

41 Benckendorff 1927, p. 5.

occurred except a skirmish between a patrol and some hooligans. Although the Cossacks and the private regiment were ready to do their duty, the morale of the guard regiment, artillery and the railway regiment was not high. The empress was persuaded to inspect the troops who were assembled in the courtyard. As she went out, 'some of the troops answered in a surly fashion'. Faced with the physical danger threatening her children, the empress's concern was for their safety above anything else. At night she slept fully clothed.

The empress and her entourage still hoped that the situation would improve with Nicholas's arrival at Tsarskoe Selo. But at 5 o'clock in the morning on 1 March she learned that the imperial trains had been detained and that Nicholas would not be coming. She sent the telegram to her husband without knowing to where it should be directed: 'The thoughts of prayers will not desert you. Lord will save. The temperatures of the children are still high. They are coughing badly. All firmly kiss you'. Her intransigent stance to preserve the principles of the monarchy was suddenly thrown out of the window, and she was now reduced to the status of an ordinary mother, concerned solely with the safety of her children. The telegram never reached the emperor; instead it fell into the hands of the Military Commission.⁴² Alone and helpless, the empress instructed Groten to enter into negotiations with Rodzianko to insure the avoidance of bloodshed and to learn the whereabouts of her husband. Groten entered into negotiations with the rebels with the empress's approval. By promising that the palace guard would send two truce emissaries to the Duma, he gained the insurgents' assurance that they would not attack the palace.⁴³

On the night of 28 February–1 March, the delegation from the Tsarskoe Selo Garrison arrived at Tauride Palace. The delegation included officers and soldiers of the Combined [*Svodnyi*] Guard Regiment, the Railway Regiment, His Majesty's Special Convoy and the Tsarskoe Selo Palace Police – in other words the military and police units specially designed to protect the imperial family. The delegation told Guchkov, who came to greet them, that they transferred their allegiance to the Duma Committee, but declared that they would protect the property and safety of the imperial family to the end. Many units remained faithful to the oath, but refused to take action against the rebels.⁴⁴ Rodzianko in turn gave the military units in the Tsarskoe Selo the Duma Committee's new assignment to protect the property of the imperial palace and security

42 GARF, f. 3748, d. 129, l. 19.

43 Benkendorff 1927, pp. 6–9; Spiridovich 1962, vol. 3, pp. 196–203.

44 Martynov 1927, p. 122; Burdzhakov, 1967, pp. 256–57; Nikolaev 2005, p. 237, 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 126–7; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 257.

of the imperial family without allowing any excesses. He sent the two Kadets, I.P. Demidov and V.A. Stepanov.⁴⁵ Despite her hatred of Rodzianko, the empress was beginning to look upon him as 'the only person who could do a lot'.⁴⁶ At 11 o'clock in the morning, however, telephone and radio communications between Tsarskoe Selo and the Stavka were cut off on the order of Engel'gardt. Alexandra virtually became a prisoner of the Duma Committee.

On the afternoon of 1 March, two Duma deputies arrived at Tsarskoe Selo.⁴⁷ They went around the barracks, and succeeded in calming the insurgents by having them pledge their allegiance to the Duma. As requested by General Groten, they did their best to prevent an attack on the imperial palace. By the time General Ivanov arrived in Tsarskoe Selo, therefore, the empress and palace authorities found it necessary to surrender the entire garrison to the Duma Committee to secure the safety of the imperial family.

From the point of view of the empress and her entourage, Ivanov's arrival was, ironically, not welcome, since the security of the imperial family hung by a thread. They had gone through the dreadful night and barely managed to achieve a precarious peace with the insurgents, but if the insurgents learned of the arrival of Ivanov's troops, this peace might be broken at any moment. Thus Groten at the railway station and the empress at the palace hinted to Ivanov that his forces were not welcome in Tsarskoe Selo. The empress summoned Ivanov for a single reason, that is, to learn from him where her husband was located. It was from Ivanov that she first learned that Nicholas's train had been diverted from Bologoe to Dno, from where he was to proceed to Pskov. Alexandra asked Ivanov if he might send a message on her behalf to her husband, since she was deprived of all other means of communicating with him. Ivanov refused her request on the grounds that he did not possess personnel to carry such a message. The rest of the empress's talk was incoherent. She talked about her sick children and then bitterly about the proposed solution of a responsible ministry.⁴⁸

45 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1966, pp. 126–7; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 257–8.

46 Spiridovich 1962, vol. 3, pp. 218–19.

47 I. Demidov, 'Tsarskoe Selo 1-go marta 1917 goda', *Poslednie novosti*, March 12, 1927.

48 Ivanov's deposition, *Padenie* 1926, vol. 5, pp. 322–3.

The Stavka Halts Ivanov's Counterrevolutionary Attempt

After 10:30 in the evening on 1 March, Bublikov informed the Duma Committee on the phone that the St. George's Battalion with artillery had arrived at the Tsarskoe Selo station. The Duma Committee did not take any chances and told General Ivanov to abandon any intention to move the troops on the railway to Petrograd, since the measures had been taken to physically obstruct movement on the railways.⁴⁹ When General Ivanov retired from the palace after talking to the empress and returned to the station, he learned that insurgents from the Tsarskoe Selo Garrison were approaching. It is not known where he received this information and whether this information was accurate, but it is most likely that someone connected with the Duma Committee fed the general this information to remove the St. George Battalion from the Tsarskoe Selo. Ivanov immediately withdrew his troops to Vyritsa to avoid confrontation with the insurgents. There he learned that only fifteen minutes after their withdrawal the insurgent soldiers and the crowds had occupied the station.⁵⁰ There is no record to indicate that the railway station was actually occupied by the insurgents, however. The withdrawal of Ivanov's troops from Tsarskoe Selo was not quite a rout, nor was it caused by the dissolving loyalty of his troops, as is often argued.⁵¹ As long as the presence of his troops might endanger the safety of the imperial family and as long as his duty did not specifically include defence of the palace and the imperial family, he had no desire to defy the express wish of the empress. Until the very end of Ivanov's operation, his forces showed no signs of faltering loyalty.⁵²

The true cause for the failure of Ivanov's offensive did not lie in the reliability of his troops. It was rather due to the change of policy of the Stavka. When he was still in Tsarskoe Selo, Ivanov received two telegrams, one from Alekseev and another from Nicholas, which fundamentally altered the nature of his expedition. Both telegrams ordered a halt until further notice. Nicholas ordered Ivanov 'not to take any action until my arrival'.⁵³

49 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 130.

50 Ivanov's deposition, *Paenie* 1926, vol. 5, p. 323.

51 Chamberlin 1935, vol. 1, p. 86.

52 A commander of the St. George Battalion, Pozharskii, however, testified at the Extraordinary Investigation Commission that he had declared that he would not give his soldiers an order to shoot at the people, even if Ivanov had given him instructions to do so. Blok 1922, pp. 41, 46; Proval 1962, p. 105. But this testimony made after the revolution may not be reliable.

53 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, l. 36; GARF, f. ChSK, d. 466, l. 30; the tsar to Ivanov, *Fevral'skaia*

Alekseev's telegram (no. 1833), to General Ivanov, which was sent early 1:15 a.m. on 1 March, but not received until late at night stated:

According to the latest information, on 28 February, complete peace was restored in Petrograd. The troops that had joined the Provisional Government in entire composition have been brought in order. The Provisional Government under the chairmanship of Rodzianko, meeting in the State Duma, asked the commanders of the military units to obey orders for the restoration of peace. The proclamation to the populace issued by the Provisional Government mentions the immutability of the monarchical basis of Russia, necessity of a new basis for election and appointment of a government. They are waiting with impatience for the arrival of His Majesty, to present the aforementioned demands and to request his acceptance of the aspirations of the people. If this information is correct, then the method of your action will be changed, and the negotiations will lead to pacification, to avoid disgraceful fratricide, which our enemy has long awaited, and to preserve institutions and to get the factories operating. The proclamation of the new minister of transport, Bublikov, to the railway workers, which I received in a roundabout way, appeals to all to intensify work to remedy the disorganisation of transportation. Let His Majesty know all this and also the conviction that it is possible to bring everything to a peaceful end, which will strengthen Russia.⁵⁴

If the Stavka's determination to organise a counterrevolutionary offensive was based on its judgement that Petrograd was thrown into complete anarchy, from which the radical elements were emerging to control the insurgents, the news of the Duma Committee's control over the situation – although Alekseev called it the 'Provisional Government' – immediately produced a change of attitude. Even before the revolution military leaders had sympathised with the moderate wing of the liberals, so it would be psychologically difficult to direct arms against those with whom the military leaders had no substantial disagreement. Such an intervention, even if successful, would totally isolate the army from

revoliutsiia 1927a, p. 53. This telegram was intercepted by the Duma Committee. According to the Duma Committee's record, this telegram was blocked by the Duma Committee and did not reach Ivanov. 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 136; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 268.

54 Alekseev to Ivanov, no. 1833, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 31. This telegram was sent to Generals Klembovskii, Ruzskii, Evert, Bruslov, Sakharov and Ianushkevich between 13:35 and 14:59 p.m., on 1 March. *Ibid.*

the rest of the population and would render the continuation of the war impossible. In the eyes of the public the army and its leaders would inevitably be associated with the reactionary 'dark forces'. Moreover, if the Stavka were to involve the army in a counterrevolutionary attempt not only against the insurgents but also against the Duma, it could no longer count on the reliability of the officers, not to mention the soldiers. Thus the Stavka welcomed, with a sigh of relief, the news that the Duma Committee was exerting its influence, with some measure of success, to restore order in the capital.

From a strictly legalistic point of view, there was no question that the Duma Committee had revolted against the legitimate authority, and as long as the supreme commander in chief's order to suppress it remained in effect, the Stavka should have had no other choice but to pursue it. But for the sake of a broader national interest, the Stavka saw catastrophe for the nation and for the army in pursuing such a policy, and decided to defy the imperial order and halt Ivanov's offensive without the emperor's permission.

The source of information on the basis of which the Stavka made this decision is not clear. Because the situation in Petrograd as described in this telegram was not quite the same as in actuality, a conspiracy theory developed, suspecting that the Duma Committee deceived the Stavka to stop Ivanov's offensive.⁵⁵ The telegram referred to the Duma Committee's proclamation, but inaccurately described its contents, which indicates that the Stavka had not obtained the two proclamations that the Duma Committee had issued on 28 February. One of the proclamations did state that order was being restored, but did not say that complete peace was restored. Neither of the proclamations had mentioned anything about the 'immutability of the monarchical basis of Russia'. It is doubtful that the information came directly from the Duma Committee. It is known that Rodzianko sent two telegrams to the commanders at the front on 1 March. The first telegram informed Alekseev that 'due to the removal of all the former Council of Ministers from administration, governmental power was transferred at the present moment to the Provisional Com-

55 Spiridovich cites two sources that intentionally attempted to mislead the Stavka with false information. The first was the deputy transport minister, Kisliakov, who talked with Alekseev and dissuaded him from taking counterrevolutionary measures. The second source was Rodzianko, who recommended Nicholas's abdication to Alekseev. Katkov also implies that this was the case. Spiridovich 1962, vol. 3, pp. 240–1; Katkov 1967, p. 315. There is no evidence to support this contention. As for Kisliakov's activities, see above. Rodzianko, on the other hand, could not have made such a proposal on the night of 28 February, since as discussed in the previous chapter, he still stood for the tsar's concession on the ministry of confidence.

mittee of the State Duma'. But it did not reach the Stavka until shortly before six o'clock in the morning. The other telegram stated that the Duma Committee's task was to 'create normal conditions of life and administration' in the capital. This telegram, however, apparently did not reach the Stavka. Alekseev was irritated by Rodzianko's frequent dispatch of telegrams to commanding officers without due consideration for the normal chain of command in the army and wrote a telegram of protest to Rodzianko, requesting that this practice be immediately discontinued.⁵⁶ Alekseev's reaction to Rodzianko leads one to doubt that there were direct negotiations between Alekseev and Rodzianko before the Stavka decided to stop Ivanov's expedition.

Although existing evidence is not conclusive, it appears that Alekseev made the decision from information supplied by the military hierarchy in Petrograd, particularly by the Naval Staff and the main administration of the General Staff. The Stavka's contact with these staffs was maintained without interruption, and they provided the Stavka with valuable details about the situation in Petrograd. The solution suggested in Alekseev's telegram (no. 1833) closely resembled the line taken by Zankevich, Domanevskii and other officers of the general staff. Their close contact with Guchkov and Engel'gardt indicates that they had a quite accurate reading of the Duma Committee's position at that moment. Justifiably, Alekseev considered their judgements more reliable than those that came from other sources. Their suggested solution resembled the line pursued by Rodzianko at the time, but it does not necessarily mean that the military was deceived by Rodzianko and the Duma Committee. The Stavka was aware that Guchkov stood firmly for the preservation of the monarchical system.

Alekseev mentioned one specific source of information: Bublikov's telegram to the railway workers. This celebrated telegram was so hostile in tone to the monarchy that it should have aroused suspicion among the military leaders of the Duma Committee's intention to stand on the principle of the 'immutability of the monarchical basis of Russia'. That it did not and that the Stavka rather welcomed Bublikov's telegram as a sign of the Duma Committee's intention to maintain the normal functioning of the railway characterised the Stavka's

56 Rodzianko to Alekseev, *Fevra'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 36; Perets 1917, pp. 41–2. When Evert mentioned that he had received two telegrams from Rodzianko, Lukomskii replied that the Stavka was aware of only one of them. Evert–Lukomskii conversation, *Fevra'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, pp. 36–7; Alekseev to Rodzianko, no. 1845, *ibid.* pp. 44–5. The telegram sent by Rodzianko to the Stavka and the commanders is noted in the Duma Committee record. See Chapter 18.

general thinking during the February Revolution.⁵⁷ The high command was more concerned with the war effort than with preservation of the monarchy.

Nonetheless, the Stavka's decision to halt Ivanov's offensive was a decisive turning point of the February Revolution. The Stavka was prepared to accept the Duma Committee as a legitimate government and to seek a negotiated settlement. Although it did not completely abandon the possibility of military intervention, its decision to halt General Ivanov's punitive action against the revolution in Petrograd meant that the chance for military intervention was virtually lost.

If the news of the Duma Committee's control over the situation in Petrograd was decisive in changing the Stavka's policy, the spread of the revolution to Moscow and to other army units convinced the Stavka all the more of the urgent necessity of concluding a peaceful settlement. By 11 o'clock in the morning the Stavka learned that revolution had broken out in Moscow and Kronstadt. The situation as described in the dispatches of telegrams from Moscow followed the familiar pattern: in the morning it was reported that while the workers took to the streets, the armed units remained at their posts.⁵⁸ Shortly after three o'clock in the afternoon, however, the first news of the soldiers' uprising in Moscow reached the Stavka. One hour later, General I.I. Mrozovskii, commander of the Moscow Military District, reported: 'In Moscow, a complete revolution. The armed units are going over to the side of the revolutionaries'. In the afternoon, the news from Kronstadt was even gloomier. Rebels took over the fortress and cut off communication with the outside. It was reported that the commander of the fortress had been killed and that insurgents were arresting the officers.⁵⁹ Around the same time the Stavka received news that the revolution had now spread to the Baltic Fleet, where Admiral Nepenin was compelled to recognise the authority of the Duma Committee without sanction from the Stavka, since 'such a direct and straightforward method is the only way that I could maintain the discipline and the military preparedness of the

57 When Klevetskii at the western front informed Lukomskii of the contents of Bublikov's telegram, Lukomskii said, 'The telegram is known to us, but it is not bad, since it is calling for order'. Lukomskii–Klevetskii conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 33.

58 Lukomskii–Evert conversation, *ibid.*, p. 37; Baranovskii–Mediokritskii conversation, *ibid.*, p. 39.

59 Mrozovskii to Alekseev, nos. 8196, 8197, *ibid.* p. 45; Lukomskii to Danilov, *ibid.*, p. 43. The revolution in Moscow and the Baltic Fleet is beyond the scope of this book. For the revolution in Moscow, see Burdzhakov 1971, pp. 1–89; *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 239–308.

units entrusted to me'.⁶⁰ It was one thing to suppress the localised insurrection in Petrograd, but it was a totally different matter to put down the revolution in Moscow, the Baltic Fleet and possibly many other places that might erupt any moment.

These ominous pieces of news hastened the Stavka's decision to recognise the Duma Committee and to attempt frantically to pressure Nicholas into granting the concession of a responsible ministry. How Nicholas finally acquiesced to this pressure will be discussed in the next chapter. It suffices to say here that, together with the concessions of a responsible ministry, Nicholas agreed to halt Ivanov's offensive and sent him a telegram, ordering the general 'not to take any action' until his arrival at Tsarskoe Selo.⁶¹ Ivanov thus received two telegrams – one from Alekseev and another from the tsar himself – ordering the temporary halt of his offensive. If Domanevskii's recommendation had no tangible effects, Ivanov had no choice but to obey the two orders. He decided to wait in Vyritsa until further instructions from the Stavka.

The halt of the counterrevolutionary operation, however, did not mean that the Stavka decided to discontinue Ivanov's operation entirely. Shortly after Alekseev sent his telegram (no. 1833) to Ivanov, Lukomskii stated to General Kvetsinskii of the western front, 'Of course, it is necessary to take all measures to ensure that the echelons will proceed without interruption'. At one o'clock on the afternoon of 1 March, more than thirteen hours after Alekseev's telegram No. 1833, the western front still continued to dispatch troops to support Ivanov.⁶² At 6:30 in the evening General Klembovskii instructed Ruzskii to have a battalion of the Vyborg Fortress Artillery march to Petrograd, if it proved to be impossible to reach there by rail. In addition, a reliable unit of the 106th Infantry Division was to be prepared to support this battalion.⁶³ During the night of 1–2 March, however, the northern front, presumably with the approval

60 Lukomskii to Danilov, *ibid.*, p. 4.

61 See Chapter 25.

62 Lukomskii–Kvetsinskii conversation, *ibid.*, p. 33; Lebedev to Lukomskii, no. 6157, *ibid.*, p. 41.

63 Klembovskii to Ruzskii, no. 1857, *ibid.*, p. 47. The fate of the Vyborg Fortress Artillery battalion offers an interesting insight into the relationship between Alekseev and Ruzskii. When the situation in Petrograd grew worse on 28 February, Alekseev ordered Ruzskii to dispatch a battalion of the Vyborg Fortress Artillery to Petrograd. Its commander, General Gulevich, learned that the Duma Committee had been formed in Petrograd and asked the Stavka to which authority in Petrograd he should subordinate himself. Gulevich to Alekseev, no. 525, *ibid.*, p. 35. For this action Gulevich was reprimanded by Ruzskii, who reminded Gulevich of his duty to obey his immediate superior officer (Ruzskii) and not to jump over the commanding hierarchy. Ruzskii to Gulevich, no. 1183/B, *ibid.*, p. 35. On

of the tsar, began recalling the reinforcements without explicit approval of the Stavka. The battalion of the Vyborg Fortress Artillery and the Tarutin Company, which had already arrived at Aleksandrovskaia – the two units located closest to Ivanov – were the first to be recalled. At the same time, without the prior approval of Alekseev, Ruzskii ordered the western and the southwestern fronts to detain the dispatched troops at the nearest railway stations.⁶⁴ The Stavka accepted the established fact and sent its instructions to the northern and the western fronts:

In view of the impossibility of moving the echelons of troops directed to Petrograd beyond Luga, the emperor's permission for the commander of the northern front to enter into negotiations with the chairman of the State Duma, and imperial consent to recall the troops sent from the northern front back to the Dvinsk region, the chief of staff requests that the measures be taken immediately not to transport those units not yet dispatched and to hold those units that are on the way at the nearest large stations.⁶⁵

As if to make sure that this decision would not be reversed by the Stavka, the northern front secured imperial sanction of the recall and cancellation of the reinforcement troops.⁶⁶

What made the military finally abandon the effort of intervention? The northern front learned during the night of 1 to 2 March that Luga Garrison had taken the side of the Duma Committee. In his telegraphic conversation with Ruzskii, Rodzianko informed the commander of the northern front that

1 March, Ivanov received a telegram from Gulevich, who informed Ivanov that transport of the Vyborg Fortress Artillery would be possible only as far as Beloostrov, since the railway further down from Beloostrov was occupied by the rebels. GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, l. 17. It is difficult to establish if the occupation of the railway line between Petrograd and Beloostrov was true, but it appears that Ruzskii halted Gulevich's advance without the Stavka's authorization. Later, the Stavka ordered the northern front to have the battalion march to Petrograd on foot, if railway transportation was impossible.

64 Danilov to commander of the 42nd Corps, no. 1221/B, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 54; Danilov to commander of the 5th Army, no. 1216/B, *Telegrammy* 1922, p. 126; Danilov to Alekseev, no. 1220, *ibid.*, p. 127; Kvetsinskii to the chief of military communications of the western front and the commander of the 2nd Army, no. 6176, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 55.

65 Lukomskii to Kvetsinskii and Danilov, no. 1869, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 60.

66 Danilov to Alekseev, no. 1227/B, *ibid.*, p. 64. Alekseev accepted the imperial decree to recall the troops. Alekseev to Evert and Brusilov, no. 1877, *ibid.*, p. 64.

troops dispatched from the northern front had revolted at Luga, occupied the station, and pledged to stop military trains.⁶⁷ If this information proved to be true, it would be ominous, the first sign that revolution had spread to the very troops sent to suppress it. Furthermore, the occupation of Luga posed a serious question about effective transportation of the reinforcements, since Luga was situated in the middle of the line between Pskov and Petrograd. The 'mutiny at Luga' was another decisive turning point for the military.

Did the 'Mutiny of Luga' Really Take Place?

The revolution had spread to the Luga Garrison on 1 March, when the soldiers left the barracks, attacked the arsenal, and began arresting the officers. The officers corps was split into two groups: one group led by N. Voronovich advocated supporting the Duma Committee and organising the insurgent soldiers along this line, while the other, represented by the commander of the garrison, General N.G. Mengden, refused to join the revolution. It was at the officers' initiative that a Military Committee was formed, which immediately established contact with the Duma Committee. The formation of the Military Committee subdued the flaring temper of the insurgents, who having shot to death several officers including General Mengden, had tasted blood. Voronovich, who assumed chairmanship of the Military Committee, and his colleagues managed to disarm the insurgents and convince them to return to their barracks.⁶⁸

The Luga Military Committee received instructions from 'Petrograd' to 'stop and disarm the Borodin Company without fail in order to avoid the possibility of useless bloodshed'.⁶⁹ There was another telegram, which was dispatched by Nekrasov to the 'Luga District Committee': 'You have promised to discontinue the movement of the troops for the pacification of Petrograd. I request that you report the details'.⁷⁰ It was a difficult task. In the approaching Borodin Company there were 2,000 disciplined soldiers with eight machine guns, while the Luga Military Committee could gather only 300 to 400 undisciplined,

67 Boldyrev to Lukomskii, *ibid.*, p. 61; Ruzskii-Rodzianko conversation, *ibid.*, pp. 55–6; Telegrammy 1922, p. 126.

68 Voronovich 1921, pp. 17–18, 23–30.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 31. Although Voronovich does not spell out who in Petrograd gave this order, we can assume that it came from the Duma Committee, either Bublikov or Nekrasov, with whom the Luga Military Committee kept up communications.

70 RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 5, ll. 5, 6.

untrained soldiers and the available guns in the reserve artillery division were for training purposes only and no use in actual battle. Against all odds, however, the members of the Military Committee decided at an emergency meeting to follow instructions. Machine guns with no cartridge belts and the training weapons were displayed on the platform. As soon as the train entered the station, three members of the Military Committee issued a strict order to the soldiers on the train to remain inside. They then hurried into the officers' car and solemnly handed to the commanders an ultimatum in the name of the Duma Committee. They demanded unconditional surrender and voluntary disarmament of officers and soldiers and declared that noncompliance would mean that artillery fire would fall on the trains.

There was no effort to resist by the Borodin Company. The commanders easily gave in, surrendered their arms, and ordered their soldiers to do the same. In fifteen minutes the entire company was disarmed.⁷¹ Whether the commanders of the Borodin Company really believed the threat of the Luga Military Committee or pretended to believe it for a good excuse not to fulfil the onerous obligation of putting down the revolution will never be known. If the latter is true, they must have decided to have a little fun in this revolutionary vignette, when they told the representatives of the Military Committee that they would wait for the arrival of the Duma Committee's representatives – a proposal that made the members of the Military Committee extremely nervous, since they feared that the approaching dawn would reveal the dummies ostentatiously displayed on the platform. The proposal was rejected and Borodin Company was ordered to return to the northern front immediately. The news of the disarmament of the Borodin Company was immediately dispatched to the Duma Committee, which in the name of Bublikov sent a telegram thanking the Military Committee for its successful operation.⁷²

Thus, there never was a mutiny at Luga by the reinforcement troops sent from the northern front. Rodzianko may not have known the details of the 'mutiny', but must have known the Military Committee's general direction. He made use of the episode to impress on Ruzskii the impossibility of continuing the counterrevolutionary attempt and the necessity of bringing about the political solution he suggested. Ruzskii knew that Rodzianko was telling him a lie. The northern front learned before one o'clock in the morning of 2 March that the Luga Garrison had taken the side of the Duma Committee. This news, not the 'mutiny of the reinforcement troops' as told by Rodzianko, led the north-

71 Voronovich 1921, pp. 32–3.

72 Ibid., pp. 32–3, 92.

ern front to reevaluate the wisdom of continuing the counterrevolutionary attempt. Soon the northern front received a report from the Borodin Company:

Before the arrival at the Luga Station, echelon No. 1 of the regiment entrusted to me, consisting of a battalion and a machine-gun unit, was surrounded by the units of the Luga Garrison ... and the soldiers were disarmed.

Nonetheless, the northern front continued to feed the Stavka with the inaccurate information that reinforcement troops had revolted at Luga.⁷³

Just as Rodzianko used this untruth to convince the northern front of the necessity of discontinuing the counterrevolutionary attempt, the commanding officers of the northern front did the same to shake the resolve of the Stavka by concealing the true information. In the meantime, the northern front went ahead in the recalling of troops without the approval of the Stavka. It is characteristic of Ruzskii that he recalled the troops closest to Ivanov, in order to preclude any possibility of them linking up with Ivanov's forces. The Stavka at first had no choice but to accept established fact. Ruzskii's actions were tantamount to insubordination.

General Ivanov Ends His Expedition

The Stavka had not completely abandoned its intention of a military intervention. The disagreement between the Stavka and the northern front on this issue became pronounced on the morning of 2 March. At 10 o'clock in the morning Alekseev sent the northern front a telegram, in which he ordered Ruzskii to dispatch officers 'in order to make sure of the true sentiment of the troops' at Ivanov's disposal, since Alekseev now had 'a basis not to trust entirely the information of Rodzianko'. Alekseev explained that he had come to learn the information on 1 March that Luga had been occupied by the representatives of the 'Provisional Government', who had definite instructions not to let the imperial trains pass.⁷⁴ The commanding officers of the northern front questioned the wisdom of this instruction, and delayed its execution.

73 Boldyrev to Lukomskii, no. 1215/B, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 61; Danilov to Alekseev, no. 1224/B, *ibid.*, p. 62; Boldyrev to commander of the 5th Army, *Telegrammy* 1922, p. 126. The last telegram mentioned here is not included in the Stavka's telegrams in *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927.

74 Alekseev to Danilov, no. 1871, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 65.

Danilov expressed doubt about the advisability of the instruction. Receiving the repeated order from the Stavka, Boldyrev asked for specific instructions as to what message to convey to Ivanov, while still expressing the pessimism about whether a special emissary could reach Ivanov because of the difficulties with railway movement. But after the Stavka insisted on the execution of its order for the third time, the northern front finally, though reluctantly, appointed the officers, although they delayed their departure until 4 March.⁷⁵ By this time, the Stavka had committed itself to seeking Nicholas's abdication, and had abandoned the idea of military intervention.

When General Ivanov was ordered by Alekseev and the emperor to halt his operation, he did not think that his mission was over, either. After he retreated to Vyritsa, Ivanov requested General N.M. Tikhmenev at the Stavka to speed up the arrival of the rest of the St. George Battalion at Vyritsa. Also he wished to communicate with the commanders of the Tsarskoe Selo Garrison and Tarutin Company at Aleksandrovskaia and to request the Tsarskoe Selo railway administration to make the arrangements necessary for his trip to Aleksandrovskaia. This request was immediately relayed to Lomonosov and Bublikov, who frantically attempted to block the linkage of Ivanov's forces with the Tarutin Company. Ivanov managed to reach Susashino when he received a telegram from Bublikov:

Your persistent wish to go further is causing an insurmountable difficulty for the august wish of His Majesty to reach Tsarskoe Selo immediately. I most urgently request that you remain in Susashino or return to Vyritsa.⁷⁶

The train he occupied was led off the main track of the Warsaw Line on the pretext of opening the line for another train, which never came. Ivanov was stuck there for several hours.⁷⁷ Unable to go further, Ivanov finally returned to Vyritsa. To the Duma Committee, which was not aware of the change of policy by the military, Ivanov's forces continued to pose a threat. It was, therefore, imperative to isolate them from both the remaining forces dispatched from the front and the emperor. The resistance of the railway authorities aggravated the general, who threatened them with arrest if his order met with delay. At Vyritsa he received another telegram from Bublikov:

75 Boldyrev to Lukomskii, no. 1229/B, *ibid.*; Lukomskii to Boldyrev, no. 1881, *ibid.*; Sutin-Sergeev conversation, *ibid.*, p. 66.

76 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, ll. 35, 38, 40.

77 Proval 1962, p. 107.

It became known to me that you are arresting and terrorising the employees of the railway who serve my administration. With the approval of the Provisional Committee of the State Duma I warn you that you bring grave responsibility on yourself by this. I recommend that you not move out of Vyritsa, otherwise in accordance with my instructions your regiment will be fired upon by the artillery of the people's army.⁷⁸

General Ivanov was completely isolated from the troops that had been made available to him. In the meantime, no reinforcement troops promised for him ever arrived. He had received no information from the Stavka since Alekseev's telegram on the previous day.⁷⁹ Outraged, Ivanov sent Alekseev a rather irate telegram:

Until now I have no information about the movement of the units assigned at my disposal. I have secret information about my train being stopped. I request that you take extraordinary measures for the restoration of order in the railway administration, which is undoubtedly receiving instructions from the Provisional Government.

After this telegram was dispatched, Ivanov received Alekseev's telegram, the first telegram since telegram No. 1833. It informed the general of the Stavka's decision to recall reinforcements.⁸⁰

While at Vyritsa, Ivanov received a telegram from Guchkov, who wished to see the general either in Pskov or at Gatchina on his way to Pskov. Guchkov and Shul'gin were entrusted by the Duma Committee to persuade Nicholas to accept abdication.⁸¹ The reason Guchkov wanted to meet Ivanov was not mentioned in his telegram. Soviet-era historians argue that Guchkov intended to negotiate with Ivanov for a possible use of his forces to suppress the insurgents in Petrograd.⁸² It is unlikely, however, that Guchkov had such intentions. The Duma Committee was united in opposition to the counterrevolutionary expedition. Bublikov's consistent attempt to isolate Ivanov's forces has been

78 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, l. 41; Proval 1962, p. 108.

79 Two telegrams were written to be dispatched to Ivanov, but they were never sent to the general. Klembovskii to Ivanov, no. 1844, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 38; Klembovskii to Ivanov, *ibid.*, p. 61.

80 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, ll. 39, 42; Ivanov to Alekseev, no. 9, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, pp. 30–1.

81 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, l. 31. See Chapter 25.

82 For instance, Diakin 1967, p. 345.

mentioned in detail, and we have also seen Rodzianko's effort to talk Ruzskii out of Ivanov's offensive. When the Duma Committee finally decided to seek Nicholas's abdication, it is unlikely that it schemed to use Ivanov's forces against the revolution. It makes more sense to think that Guchkov's appointment with Ivanov was made for the same purpose as the Domanevskii mission and Rodzianko's conversation with Ruzskii – to convince the general of the uselessness of the counterrevolutionary attempt.

Ivanov, as we have seen, was unable to move out of Vyritsa, and cabled to Guchkov that he would wait for him there. Guchkov immediately promised to see the general either at Vyritsa or Gatchina, if Ivanov could reach there, on his way back from Pskov to Petrograd. But on 3 March, after the negotiations with Nicholas, Guchkov returned directly to Petrograd, and expressed his regret in a telegram to Ivanov that he did not have a chance to meet him.⁸³ Since Guchkov learned in Pskov that the reinforcements had been recalled and that the military leaders had finally decided to call off the counterrevolutionary attempt, he had no reason to waste time by seeing the general.

After Ivanov learned that the Stavka had decided to recall the reinforcement troops, he received a telephone call from the commander of the Tarutin Company, who told him that his company had received instructions to evacuate from Aleksandrovskaiia and return to the front.⁸⁴ After this Ivanov was left in the dark as to what the Stavka intended to do with his forces. On 2 March the Duma Committee sent a telegram to Alekseev, Brusilov and Gurko, requesting that in view of the fact that all the military units in Petrograd had pledged allegiance to the Provisional Government headed by Prince L'vov, General Kornilov be appointed the commander of the Petrograd Military District in order to restore order and to save the capital from anarchy.⁸⁵ On 3 March, he received Rodzianko's telegram saying that General Alekseev had appointed General Kornilov commander of the Petrograd Military District, and that Ivanov was relieved of his post.⁸⁶ Rodzianko demanded his immediate return to Mogilev. After he inquired about the accuracy of this information, Ivanov received a one-sentence telegram from the Stavka: 'You and the St. George Battalion are ordered to return to Mogilev'.⁸⁷ Ivanov left Vyritsa with his troops at 3

83 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, ll. 32, 33.

84 Proval 1962, p. 108.

85 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 135–7; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 269–70.

86 GARF, f. ChSK, d. 643, l. 45.

87 Klembovskii to Ivanov, no. 1940, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 44. This telegram was sent to Ivanov after the general had already left Vyritsa at 3 p.m. on 3 March.

o'clock in the afternoon and at Dno Station he learned of Nicholas's abdication. On 5 March he arrived at Mogilev, and reported to Alekseev. After he was officially relieved of his duty, he reviewed his troops. He thanked each company of the St. George Battalion, which remained intact and loyal to their commander throughout his unfortunate journey, and expressed his hope that they would loyally serve the new government.⁸⁸

The Stavka and Counterrevolutionary Attempts

General Ivanov's counterrevolutionary attempt represented a serious intention on the part of the military leaders to suppress the revolution in Petrograd. As long as the Stavka believed that the capital city was thrown into complete anarchy and that there was a real possibility of a takeover by the extreme radical elements, it was prepared to send massive troops from the front to put it down. But as soon as it learned that the Duma Committee was successfully restoring order, it immediately ordered a halt to Ivanov's operation. It hoped that it would be possible to reach a negotiated settlement with the Duma Committee without involving troops from the front. The news of the spread of revolution in Moscow and in other units of the armed forces convinced the military of the necessity of reaching an agreement with the Duma Committee as quickly as possible. The military was split, however, over what to do with Ivanov's forces. Both the Stavka and the northern front attempted to isolate them, lest Ivanov should unilaterally act against Petrograd, and wreck the carefully orchestrated effort to reach a political settlement. But while the commanding officers of the northern front considered it wise to call off Ivanov's offensive once and for all, the Stavka did not completely relinquish the possibility of military intervention and it was not until it finally committed itself to Nicholas's abdication that the Stavka agreed to cancel Ivanov's offensive altogether.

As long as Ivanov depended on the support of the reinforcement troops from the front to initiate an operation against Petrograd, his small forces had no practical effect on the course of the revolution. It should be pointed out, however, that contrary to popular interpretation, Ivanov's forces never disintegrated. If Ivanov's offensive failed, it was not due to the unreliability of his forces, but to the change of policy made by the Stavka.

The existence of Ivanov's forces near Petrograd, however, created serious concern among the members of the Duma Committee. Realising that a mil-

88 Proval 1962, p. 109.

itary confrontation between the insurgents and organised forces of the tsarist army would jeopardise the very existence of the Duma Committee, it made a frantic attempt to stop Ivanov's expedition. Bublikov and Lomonosov took advantage of control over the railway and ordered railway authorities to block military trains. Bublikov had the Luga Military Committee stop the approaching reinforcements from the front. Rodzianko tried to talk Ruzskii out of the counterrevolutionary attempt by exaggerating an episode about the 'mutiny at Luga' that he knew did not take place.

Thus, the military finally accepted the Duma Committee's position that resolution of the crisis required a political, not a military solution. But as to what this political solution ought to be, there was a serious disagreement between the military and the Duma Committee.

The Abdication of Nicholas II

Alekseev Recommends the Responsible Ministry

As news of the revolution spread to the front, Alekseev received many questions from local commanders concerning his attitude toward the Duma Committee. Whether these local commanders should support the Duma Committee or remain loyal to the emperor more or less depended on Alekseev's decision.¹ By halting Ivanov's operation, Alekseev took the first major step toward recognition of the Duma Committee at about 11 p.m. on 28 February. On the afternoon of 1 March, several disheartening news dispatches arrived at Mogilev. Moscow had fallen into the hands of the insurgents, and mutiny was spreading to the Baltic Fleet and Kronstadt. Admiral Nepenin of the Baltic Fleet urged the tsar to come to terms with Rodzianko immediately: he himself had unilaterally recognised the authority of the Duma Committee without sanction from the Stavka. General Brusilov urged the tsar to recognise 'the accomplished fact' and emphasised 'the necessity of solving the terrible situation peacefully and quickly'.² Such news hastened Alekseev to seek a compromise with the Duma Committee.

In the late afternoon Alekseev sent the tsar a telegram that reached Pskov before Nicholas's arrival there. It told the tsar of the spread of the revolution to Moscow. Since the army was closely connected with life in the rear, Alekseev reported, 'It can be said with certainty that a disturbance in the rear will provoke the same in the army'. When the revolution was taking place in the rear, it would be impossible to ask the army to keep fighting, since the social composition of the soldiers and officers 'will not give any basis to consider that the army will not react to what goes on in Russia'. Alekseev concluded: 'The suppression of the disorders by force is dangerous under the present conditions and will lead Russia and the army to ruin'. It would be necessary to take measures that would quiet the population and restore normal life in the country. If the Duma Committee's attempt to restore order was not

1 Gulevich to Alekseev, no. 525, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 35; Evert-Lukomskii conversation, *ibid.*, pp. 36–7. For the abdication drama and the role of the Stavka, see also Ioffe 1987, pp. 69–83.

2 See Chapter 24; Brusilov to Frederiks, no. 744, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 47.

accompanied by the emperor's 'act quieting the population', then power would inevitably go to the 'hands of the extreme elements tomorrow'. Thus, Alekseev recommended:

I beg you, for the sake of salvation of Russia and the dynasty, place at the head of the government a person whom Russia would believe and entrust him with the formation of a cabinet. At the present moment this is the only salvation. It is impossible to delay, and it has to be done immediately. To report Your Majesty otherwise will unconsciously and criminally bring Russia to ruin and shame, and create a danger for the dynasty of Your Imperial Majesty.³

By the time Nicholas arrived at Pskov, however, Alekseev's position had drastically changed. Until then all he had asked for was the formation of a ministry of confidence. On this point Alekseev had maintained the same position prior to Nicholas's departure from Mogilev. But some time early on the evening of 1 March he had come to advocate the establishment of a responsible ministry. On the basis of the existing sources we can only speculate the exact time of this crucial decision and the circumstances behind it. Telegram 1847, in which he still clung to a ministry of confidence, was sent shortly before 4 p.m. The first official document that confirmed Alekseev's change of policy was his telegram 1865 to the tsar, which was not sent from the Stavka until 10:20 p.m.⁴ But in all likelihood Alekseev made this decision sometime before 7:30 p.m., shortly before Nicholas's arrival at Pskov.

It appears that two events were responsible for Alekseev's change of policy. First, around 6 p.m. the news of the revolution in Kronstadt and the Baltic Fleet reached the Stavka. The spread of the revolution to Moscow was alarming enough, but it now threatened the very existence of the armed forces. Although there is no direct evidence to link this news with Alekseev's change of policy, it seems clear that the Stavka took it extremely seriously. General Klembovskii, under Alekseev's instruction, sent telegrams to the commanders at the front and explained that the spread of the revolution to Moscow, Kronstadt, and the Baltic Fleet had forced the Stavka to request that the tsar 'issue an act

3 Alekseev to Nicholas, no. 1847, *ibid.*, pp. 39–40. This telegram was written before the news of the revolution in Kronstadt and the Baltic Fleet reached the Stavka.

4 Alekseev to Nicholas, no. 1865, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a*, pp. 53–4. In Lukomvskii's telegram to Danilov at 6 p.m. on 1 March, Alekseev merely recommended that the tsar meet the demand of the Duma. Lukomskii to Danilov, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a*, p. 44; Document 91, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996*, p. 217.

capable of calming the population and ending the revolution'. Klembovskii then continued:

General Alekseev reports that the salvation of Russia and the possibility of continuing the war will be achieved only when at the head of the government stands a person who can enjoy the confidence of the population and who can form a corresponding [*sootvetstvuiushchii*] cabinet.⁵

Klembovskii's telegram indicates that the Stavka had not quite made up its mind to pursue the establishment of a responsible ministry but was strongly leaning toward it. An imperial decree significant enough to calm the population, which the Stavka decided to request of the tsar, seems to go a little further than a ministry of confidence. It is possible to speculate that Klembovskii meant 'responsible' ministry when he used the awkward phrase 'corresponding cabinet'.

Klembovskii's telegram was sent sometime between 6 and 7:30 p.m., while the imperial trains were travelling between Dno and Pskov. During this period another event took place. It appears that Alekseev had direct communication with Ruzskii through the Hughes apparatus, although the existing sources do not record any such conversations. Klembovskii's telegram no. 1854/718 was sent to all the commanders except General Ruzskii since, as noted on the margin of the original telegram, the commander of the northern front was separately 'oriented'.⁶ It is likely that the possibility of seeking a political solution to the crisis by granting a responsible ministry was discussed by the two military leaders. We do not know whether it was Ruzskii who pressured Alekseev to accept this position or Alekseev himself who sounded out this possibility to Ruzskii. In either case in this unrecorded but crucial conversation both military leaders seem to have agreed to pursue the formation of a responsible ministry.

Ruzskii Persuades Nicholas to Accept a Constitutional Monarchy

The difficult task of persuading the emperor to grant the concession of a responsible ministry thus fell upon General Ruzskii. From the very beginning of the revolution, Ruzskii's sympathy lay with the liberal opposition. He later stated that he was neither right nor left politically, but that he believed it was

⁵ Klembovskii to commanders, no. 1854/718, *ibid.*, pp. 40–1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

impossible for a tsar like Nicholas to reign over such a vast empire as Russia.⁷ As early as 27 February, when the outcome of the disturbances in the streets was not yet clear, Ruzskii dispatched a telegram to the tsar imploring him to take measures to quiet the country. He was the first military leader to align himself with the Duma opposition during the crisis. While the tsar and the Stavka were determined to suppress the revolution by force, Ruzskii recommended to the tsar not to take military measures but instead to grant political concessions.⁸ As long as he believed Petrograd to be in chaos, he fully cooperated with the Stavka in its military intervention and complied with Alekseev's order to dispatch reinforcements from the northern front. But when he learned of the formation of the Duma Committee, he began to have serious doubts about the wisdom of intervention. While Alekseev only temporarily halted Ivanov's operation, Ruzskii had recalled the troops he had dispatched to Petrograd without the Stavka's prior approval. Nicholas thus spent the most crucial two days of his life under the influence of the military commander who was most decisively against the emperor. His Chief of Staff, Iu.N. General Danilov, and the quartermaster, Lieutenant-General Boldyrev, two subordinating officers, fully supported Ruzskii.⁹

Two days after his departure from Mogilev, Nicholas finally arrived at Pskov at 7:30 p.m. on 1 March. He was greeted by the governor of Pskov, but the customary inspection of the guard of honour did not take place. To the consternation of the entourage, Ruzskii and his important subordinates failed to appear at the station on time to welcome the emperor. A few minutes after the arrival, Ruzskii appeared with his chief of staff, Danilov, and his aide-de-camp, Count Sheremet'ev. According to an eyewitness: 'Stooping, grey, and old, Ruzskii walked in rubber galoshes; he was in the uniform of the general staff. His face was pale and sickly, and his eyes under the glasses revealed hostility'. Nicholas, on the other hand, maintained his usual calm. The tsar told Ruzskii that he expected to meet Rodzianko at Pskov, because he had failed to come to Dno as he had promised. He explained that he had left Mogilev since the situation was serious and he hoped that he could be closer to the scene, where he could talk personally with the necessary people. Ruzskii then asked for an audience before Rodzianko arrived so that he could give the tsar an important report

7 Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, p. 208. General Ruzskii and his staff (General Iu.N. Danilov and V.G. Boldyrev) were disposed to the view that it would be necessary to accept a constitutional system with a responsible ministry. See Kulikov 2014c, pp. 385–7.

8 Martynov 1927, pp. 90–1; Ruzskii to Nicholas, no. 1147/B, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 13; *Vil'chkovskii* 1922, pp. 163–4.

9 Kulikov 2014b, p. 387.

entrusted to him by Alekseev. The appointment was set at nine o'clock. Ruzskii talked with the emperor's entourage for a little while and discovered that they were oblivious to the seriousness of the situation. They blamed Khabalov and Balk for incompetence, but hoped that General Ivanov, with reliable troops, would soon put down the revolt.¹⁰

This was more or less what Nicholas had in mind also. Isolated from events in Petrograd while he was travelling in the countryside, he had no knowledge of the Stavka's decision to halt Ivanov's operation and its recognition of the Duma Committee. When he read the piles of telegrams, which shattered his naive notion, his shock must have been great. For the first time he learned of the revolution's spread to Moscow, the Baltic Fleet, and Kronstadt. Alekseev, who had strongly endorsed Nicholas's plan to suppress the revolution by force, now urged the tsar to stop Ivanov's operation. General Brusilov, Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovich, artillery inspector at the Stavka, and his own brother, Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, all appealed to the tsar to accept Alekseev's recommendations. There was no news from his wife or from Tsarskoe Selo.¹¹

Ruzskii was well aware that convincing the emperor of the necessity of the concession to the Duma Committee would be difficult. Thinking nervously of the historical role he was to play, he felt himself extremely ignorant of events in Petrograd and of the Stavka's intentions. He finally went to the tsar's salon car, but had to wait for an hour in the corridor, since Voeikov, 'busy with smoking a cigar and straightening out the pictures on the wall', neglected to tell the emperor of Ruzskii's arrival. Finally, at ten o'clock he was received by Nicholas.

Ruzskii began with a general outline of events as reported by the Stavka. He made it clear that what he intended to report was not concerned with military matters, but matters of state structure, which would go beyond his competence. He expressed fear that the emperor might not wish to listen to his report, since he might not have much confidence in the commander of the northern front and was accustomed to the report of General Alekseev, with whom Ruzskii had many disagreements and with whom Ruzskii had a strained relationship. But Nicholas told Ruzskii to state his opinion frankly. Immediately getting to the point, Ruzskii urged the tsar to grant a responsible ministry. But, as expected,

10 Dubenskii 1922, pp. 46–7; Vil'chkovskii 1922, p. 167; Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, p. 204.

11 Kulikov argues that by the time Nicholas arrived at Pskov, he was disposed to grant a ministry of confidence, which Kulikov characterises as 'parliamentarism'. Nicholas's close advisers, such as Dubenskii and Fredericks, also supported this political concession. Kulikov 2014b, pp. 387–8. But his closest adviser, Voeikov, was adamantly opposed to any political concession.

the tsar rejected this suggestion 'quietly, coolly, but with the feeling of a deep conviction'. Ruzskii was persistent. As he later recalled, he mustered 'all nerves to tell the Emperor all that I thought about individual persons who occupied responsible posts in the last years, and who seemed to me the greatest mistakes ... both in the government and in the Stavka'. Nicholas told Ruzskii that he was opposing a responsible ministry not from personal interests nor for any concealed purposes, but 'he was not entitled to give up the whole matter of governing Russia to the hands of those who, today in the government, could cause such blunders to the fatherland and tomorrow wash their hands, and send in their resignations from the cabinet'. Ruzskii reminded Nicholas that under the existence of the State Council and the State Duma, autocracy was merely a fiction. Nicholas declared:

I am responsible before God and Russia for everything that has happened and will happen. Whether ministers are responsible before the Duma and the State Council, it is all the same to me.

To Nicholas, autocracy with the emperor at its head was not a 'fiction', but the essence of his moral and religious responsibility. Here in this conversation the most fundamental essence of Russia's crisis was revealed. Nicholas was clinging to his mythical understanding of the Russian state as the autocracy headed by the tsar whose responsibility was not to the 'nation', but to God. Ruzskii was presenting the view of Russia as a nation state, governed by the legal institution to which the emperor himself should be subordinated. Ruzskii emphasised: 'The emperor reigns, but a government governs'. But Nicholas retorted that he could not understand such a formula and that he would have had to be brought up differently to understand it. He repeated that he was not clinging to power for personal interest, but simply could not take measures against his own conscience. The conference was, indeed, stormy and completely at cross purposes. Ruzskii's attempts at persuasion seemed to no avail.¹²

At about 11 o'clock the long awaited telegram from Alekseev, Telegram 1865, finally arrived at Pskov. In this new telegram Alekseev suggested to the tsar that in view of the 'disorganisation of the army and the impossibility of continuing the war', the only possible solution would be to 'recognise a responsible ministry, the composition of which should be entrusted to the chairman of the State Duma'. According to Alekseev, the Duma Committee could still stop the

12 Vil'chikovskii 1922, pp. 167–70. Kulikov defends Nicholas's argument as 'rational'. Kulikov 2012b, p. 389. I find this argument unconvincing.

complete breakdown of authority. A further loss of time would diminish the chances for restoration and maintenance of order and create circumstances favourable to the extreme radical elements. Finally, Alekseev proposed that the emperor sign a manifesto drafted by the Stavka for a responsible ministry.

The draft manifesto Alekseev asked Nicholas to sign stated:

In the desire to unite all the forces of the people for the purpose of achieving victory as soon as possible, I have considered it necessary to call a Ministry which would be responsible before the representatives of the people, entrusting its formation to the Chairman of the State Duma Rodzianko; the Ministry should be composed of persons enjoying the confidence of all Russia.¹³

The recommendation – establishment of a ministry responsible to the Duma, headed by Rodzianko – was consistent with the policy that Rodzianko pursued after he abandoned the effort to form a ministry of confidence, and the policy he had pursued with the grand dukes until 1 March.

To Nicholas Alekseev's desertion was a great blow. His stubborn resistance to Ruzskii can be explained partly by his belief that at least Alekseev had not advocated a responsible ministry. Alekseev's telegram revealed that what Ruzskii had advocated was not merely the personal opinion of the commander of the northern front he did not trust, but also the opinion of the entire army. As Katkov observes, Nicholas could not oppose their demand without preparing 'a drastic purge of the Army High Command' – an impossibility in time of war and for that matter even at peace time. Thus, Nicholas finally agreed to issue the manifesto sent by Alekseev without the slightest change and without studying it carefully, at least for that moment, and in addition also agreed to recall all troops sent from the front. Ruzskii himself later confessed: 'I do not know if I would have been successful in convincing the emperor, had it not been for Alekseev's telegram'.¹⁴

Retiring to his office, Ruzskii immediately dispatched a telegram to let Alekseev know of Nicholas's consent to the manifesto. But when he received a draft copy of the telegram Nicholas was supposed to send to Rodzianko, he discovered with shock that it mentioned nothing about a responsible ministry and merely authorised Rodzianko to form a cabinet with the exceptions of

13 Alekseev to Nicholas, no. 1865, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 53; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 9; Steinberg/Khrushalev 1995, p. 89.

14 Katkov 1967, p. 323; Vil'chkovskii 1922, p. 170; Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, p. 204.

the ministers of war, navy and foreign affairs. Dumfounded, Ruzskii asked Voeikov to tell the emperor that this telegram would not be acceptable. He asked for another audience.¹⁵ It was already past midnight. Finally Ruzskii was summoned to the emperor's salon car again. This time Nicholas asked him about the details of the text of the manifesto. A dreadful suspicion crossed Ruzskii's mind that Nicholas might have changed his mind. He asked the emperor if he had acted in an unacceptable way by having already informed the Stavka of the emperor's agreement with the manifesto. This was another way of telling the tsar that his acceptance of a responsible ministry was already an established fact. Nicholas answered that he had made up his mind to grant a responsible ministry for the good of Russia, since Ruzskii and Alekseev, who could hardly agree on anything, were of the same opinion.¹⁶ Reassured, Ruzskii dispatched a telegram to Ivanov ordering him to halt his operation. At the same time, he made arrangements to speak directly to Rodzianko through the Hughes apparatus rather than to send him a telegram, to tell him the news of the emperor's acceptance of a responsible ministry. Ruzskii was completely exhausted and could hardly stand up. He went to bed to take a catnap with the conviction that this hard-won concession of a responsible ministry would once and for all quiet the nation.

Rodzianko Proposes Nicholas's Abdication

About 3:30 in the morning of 2 March, Ruzskii was awakened with the news that Rodzianko was at the Hughes apparatus in the General Staff in Petrograd. This conversation between Ruzskii and Rodzianko, which was partially discussed at the end of Chapter 23, was one of the most important incidents in the February Revolution, one that led directly to the abdication of Nicholas II.¹⁷

As discussed in Chapter 22, Ruzskii asked Rodzianko why he had cancelled the promised trip to Pskov. Rodzianko gave two rather unconvincing reasons. Ruzskii then told Rodzianko that the tsar had finally agreed to grant a responsible ministry, the formation of which would be entrusted to Rodzianko. Ruzskii must have expected that Rodzianko would receive this news with enthusiasm.

15 Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, p. 204.

16 Vil'chkovskii 1922, pp. 170–1.

17 Ruzskii–Rodzianko conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, pp. 55–9; *Telegrammy Ruzskago* 1922, pp. 127–33; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 92; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 132–3. For Nicholas's abdication, see also Safonov 2005, pp. 215–71. Safonov, however, adds no new information.

The Duma Chairman's reply, however, hit the unsuspecting Ruzskii like a bolt out of the blue. Rodzianko answered: 'It is obvious that His Majesty and you did not take into account what was going on here'. The picture Rodzianko presented as the real situation in Petrograd was completely different from what Ruzskii had been led to believe. According to the Duma Committee's Chairman, 'one of the most terrible revolutions is approaching, the course of which is impossible to reverse'. Soldiers were roaming about in the streets, randomly killing officers. The ugly passions of the insurgents were unleashed to such an extent that it would be almost impossible to control them. Rodzianko was forced to take the side of the insurgents 'to avoid anarchy and demoralisation, which might bring the state to a downfall'. He was obliged even to 'imprison all the ministers except for the ministers of war and navy in the Petropavlovsk Fortress, to avoid bloodshed'. Agitation was now directed against anyone who tried to counsel moderation. Rodzianko then concluded, 'I consider it necessary to tell you that what you have proposed is not enough; the problem of the dynasty has been put point blank'.

The gloomy news presented by Rodzianko must have shocked Ruzskii, who had been assured that the capital had resumed normal functions since the Duma Committee had taken power. In fact, only several hours before Ruzskii had received a telegram from Rodzianko himself, which assured him that order was being restored.¹⁸ The Duma Committee's control of the situation was the most important factor behind the change of policy by the Stavka in suspending counterrevolutionary action and seeking peaceful settlement with the Duma Committee. Both Ruzskii and Alekseev had believed that the manifesto granting a constitutional government could bring the crisis to a peaceful end. But Rodzianko's new information destroyed whatever optimism remained in Ruzskii. He confessed that the situation described by Rodzianko was totally different from what he had believed. Such anarchy would endanger the continuation of the war. Ruzskii then asked what kind of solution Rodzianko had in mind for the dynastic question.

Rodzianko moved to the crux of the issue. Hatred toward the dynasty had reached its furthest limit, and had led the insurgents to present the formidable demand for the abdication of Nicholas in favour of his son, under the regency of Mikhail Aleksandrovich. Rodzianko went on to say that General

18 Rodzianko to Ruzskii, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a*, p. 52. This telegram had said: 'All measures for security of order in the capital are taken. Information concerning the railway is maintained carefully and without interruption. There is no danger for transportation of food supplies. Measures are taken. The disorder which had erupted is being liquidated. Calm is being restored, although with great difficulty'.

Ivanov's expedition would pour fuel onto the fire, and would lead inevitably to a civil war. Thus he asked the commander of the northern front to recall the troops.

Ruzskii answered that the emperor had already sent Ivanov an imperial order not to take any measure until his arrival, and that the tsar had agreed to recall the other troops sent from the front. Ruzskii stated that the emperor had consented to halt Ivanov's operation and agreed to sign the manifesto granting a responsible ministry, entrusting its formation to Rodzianko himself. He then read the manifesto prepared by the Stavka and accepted by the emperor. To Ruzskii's desperate effort to limit the concession to the formation of a responsible ministry, Rodzianko replied:

Power is slipping from my hands. The anarchy has reached such a degree that I am compelled tonight to announce the formation of the Provisional Government. Unfortunately, the manifesto was too late; it should have been issued immediately after my first telegram ... Time was wasted and there is no return.

Rodzianko's statement was a strange yet shrewd juxtaposition of two contradictory positions. On the one hand, he held an extremely pessimistic view of the anarchy prevailing in the capital, while, on the other, he presented the picture that the people were united under the Duma Committee. Anarchy had reached the point that 'power was slipping from the hands' of the chairman of the Duma, and the Duma Committee's effort to restore order was 'far from successful'. And yet 'all the troops joined the State Duma' and 'there was no disagreement' between the Duma and the people. On the one hand, there was anarchy, in which 'soldiers are killing officers', but on the other, there was order and unity in which 'everywhere the troops remain on the side of the Duma and the people'.

We have already seen the predicament in which Rodzianko found himself in the Duma Committee. He had staunchly opposed abdication for the past few days, but by 1 March the Duma Committee finally rejected his moderation and adopted abdication as its official demand. With the shift of policy concerning Nicholas's future, Rodzianko's personal power considerably declined. Rodzianko's statement reflected more accurately his personal power within the Duma Committee than the general situation in Petrograd. When he stated that power was slipping from his hands, that people with moderate demands were losing ground, and that the question of abdication was put point blank, he was not very far off the mark, if these claims referred to the political situation within the Duma Committee. He had been put in an extremely delicate

position. To avoid civil war, he had presented the picture to the Stavka and the military leaders at the front with emphasis on the Duma Committee's control of the situation and with assurance that the concession of a responsible ministry would be enough to quiet the insurgents and restore order. The Duma Committee was now advocating Nicholas's abdication, and in a few hours its official delegates would confront the emperor with this demand. But it is interesting to note that Rodzianko did not reject the option of the formation of a responsible ministry headed by the Chairman of the Duma that the Stavka had forced Nicholas to accept. He was interested in keeping that option just in case, depending on how the high command would react to the radical proposal of Nicholas's abdication, despite the expected opposition from the rest of the members of the Duma Committee.

The reaction of the military would be hard to guess, but there was a real danger of its stepping up military intervention. Rodzianko's conversation with Ruzskii was therefore a master stroke by which he tried to prepare the military for the bad news as well as to prevent further erosion of his personal influence among them. It is interesting that while he presented the abdication as the aspiration of the masses, he himself remained noncommittal. When Ruzskii asked whether or not the issuance of the manifesto was needed, Rodzianko answered: 'I really do not know how to answer. It will all depend upon the course of events, which are developing with terrifying speed'. Not knowing the military's next move, it was better for Rodzianko to leave a little room for retreat should the high command reject the demand for abdication. As Startsev points out, Rodzianko was engaged in his personal game to keep the option of heading the government.¹⁹

Was Ruzskii aware of the contradictions in the information given by Rodzianko? It is difficult to attribute his blindness – as Ruzskii's subordinate Vil'chkovskii does – entirely to physical and psychological exhaustion after the long and violent encounter with the emperor.²⁰ If the decisions of the high command hinged on the Duma Committee's ability to contain the anarchy, Rodzianko's simultaneous emphasis on the Duma Committee's control of the insurgents and on the danger of the prevailing anarchy must have struck him as being contradictory. Moreover, the contrast between Rodzianko's previous telegram and his information during the conversation was so obvious that Ruzskii could not have failed to question the reliability of Rodzianko's information. In addition, what really happened at Luga Station must have been relayed to him

19 Startsev 1980, p. 76.

20 Vil'chkovskii 1922, pp. 175–6.

by this time.²¹ Thus, Ruzskii possessed ample grounds to suspect Rodzianko's truthfulness.

Yet in the conversation Ruzskii showed no hint of such suspicions. He might have been careful in covering himself, as Katkov speculates, because the text of the conversation would be inevitably relayed to the Stavka and to the emperor.²² More importantly, however, his silence on Rodzianko's contradictions was based on political calculations. As soon as he learned of the existence of the Duma Committee in Petrograd, he seemed to draw a conclusion that counterrevolutionary measures should be avoided at all costs and that a political settlement should be reached through the Duma Committee. For him the most important task at hand was the continued prosecution of the war, for which everything else should be sacrificed. As long as the insurgents in Petrograd had sworn allegiance to the Duma Committee, any military intervention would mean a civil war within the nation, which would undoubtedly render the continuation of the external war impossible. Thus, he began recalling the troops sent from the front without the Stavka's permission. He wished that peaceful settlement could be reached with the concession of a responsible ministry, but if it was impossible, he was willing to accept Nicholas's abdication. True, there is no indication that he supported the abdication during the conversation with Rodzianko, but he never forcefully rejected this idea, either. From his point of view, therefore, there was no sense in pointing out Rodzianko's contradictions. It would serve no political purpose; it would be better to pretend to believe in Rodzianko and to let him be the initiator of the demand for abdication.

Alekseev and Commanders Switch from Responsible Ministry to Nicholas's Abdication

While the conversation between Ruzskii and Rodzianko through the Hughes apparatus was still in progress, General Danilov of the northern front began conveying its contents to the Stavka shortly before 6 o'clock in the morning. At 10:15 a.m. Alekseev sent his telegram 1872 to all the commanders – Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich (Caucasian front), General Evert (western front), General Brusilov (southwestern front), General Sakharov (Romanian front), Admirals Nepenin and Kolchak (Baltic Fleet and the Black Sea Fleet) – describing the

²¹ See Chapter 24.

²² Katkov 1967, pp. 320–1.

gist of the Ruzskii-Rodzianko conversations that morning, and requesting their reactions to Rodzianko's proposal for Nicholas's abdication. What Alekseev did during these three hours is not clear, but his reaction does not seem to have been an instant acceptance of Rodzianko's explanations. The telegram explained:

Although for the time being the Chairman of the State Duma enjoyed confidence, he was nevertheless afraid that it would be impossible to check the popular passion. Now the dynastic question has been put point-blank, and the war may be continued until its victorious end only provided the demands regarding the abdication from the throne in favour of the son and under the regency of Mikhail Aleksandrovich are satisfied.

Thus, introducing what Rodzianko proposed, Alekseev's telegram went on to make his recommendations:

It is necessary to save the active army from disintegration; to continue the fight against the external enemy until the end; to save the independence of Russia and the fate of the dynasty. This needs to be put into the highest priority even at the sacrifice of costly concessions. If you share my views, then kindly telegraph through the Commander in Chief of the Northern Front your petition as faithful subjects to His Majesty, advising me of it.²³

It is important to note that Alekseev did not recommend Nicholas's abdication outright. He was merely introducing Rodzianko's proposal, emphasising that Rodzianko was the only hope to restore order in the capital. The telegram implies Alekseev's leaning toward acceptance of the abdication, but he left it to the collective decision of the commanders. He had his subordinates contact each commander to convey his preference for abdication, but he was careful not to push this position in the circular telegram.

Curiously, ten minutes before he sent this telegram, he contacted the northern front, and cast serious doubts on the authenticity of Rodzianko's information concerning the revolt at Luga Station, ordering the northern front to dispatch reliable officers to contact General Ivanov. What Alekseev did between 5:48, when Danilov first informed Alekseev of the contents of the Ruzskii-Rodzianko conversation, and 10:15, when Alekseev sent a circular telegram to

23 Alekseev to the commanders in chief of the fronts, *Dokumenty Lukomskogo 1922*, pp. 259–62; *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927a*, pp. 67–8, 68–9.

the commanders, is not known. It is unlikely that Alekseev sent the circular telegram merely on the basis of the information given by Rodzianko, whose reliability he suspected. Although existing sources do not clear up this matter, it is possible to surmise that during these three hours Alekseev tried to check the veracity of Rodzianko's information, possibly through channels to the Naval and/or the General Staffs. The result of this contact may have been mixed. On the one hand, it revealed the mendacity of Rodzianko's tale of the 'revolt at Luga', but on the other hand, this source might have generally accepted the general situation in Petrograd as outlined in Rodzianko's conversation, and it might even have recommended that the Stavka accept the abdication. Thus, by 10 o'clock in the morning, Alekseev also came out in favour of abdication, although he did not completely abandon the possibility of military intervention.

It is interesting to note that to Alekseev the integrity of the army and continuation of the war had higher priority than the preservation of the monarchy. Alekseev further emphasised the necessity of maintaining unity among the commanders of the active army and of saving the army from 'instability and possible occasions of treason to duty'. There was a danger of a split within the army in its attitude toward abdication. Alekseev must have foreseen the possibility of a civil war in which army units swearing allegiance to the emperor and others supporting the Duma Committee would be involved in an armed clash. While Ruzskii's willingness to cooperate with the Duma Committee was apparent to him by the northern front's hasty recall of the troops, communications with Evert and Sakharov in the past few days had indicated that they were not enthusiastically disposed to the Stavka's support of the 'rebel' Duma Committee. The best course of action seemed to Alekseev to take the posture of non-interference in internal politics, while putting pressure on the tsar to sacrifice himself for a peaceful settlement of the crisis.²⁴

This circular telegram was conveyed to the most important commanders in personal telegraphic communications by the representatives of the Stavka. General Klembovskii dealt with Evert, who expressed his general agreement with Alekseev in that the issue should be resolved only from above, by the imperial decision to abdicate. He feared that otherwise there would be some elements hostile to either the abdication or its refusal, and probably 'those who wish to fish in troubled waters'. He then asked Klembovskii if he had time to consult other commanders on this matter. Klembovskii answered that there

24 Alekseev to Evert, no. 1872, in Evert–Klembovskii conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 67; Alekseev–Brusilov conversation, *ibid.*, p. 69; *Telegrammy Ruszkago* 1922, p. 136.

was no time for consultation. Only the unanimous opinion of the military leaders would be able to overcome Nicholas's hesitation.²⁵ Alekseev himself asked Brusilov to send the tsar a telegram to persuade him to accept the abdication. Brusilov completely agreed with Alekseev and promised to do so. Lukomskii talked to Sakharov, who replied that however sad it might be, he, too, had to agree with the unanimous opinion. All the commanders were requested to send their reactions to the Stavka rather than to the emperor directly. Since Ruzskii's opinion was known to the Stavka, he was not consulted.²⁶ The answers from the commanders reached the Stavka by 2:30 in the afternoon.

While Alekseev tried to persuade the generals to endorse his policy, he instructed N.I. Bazili to look into the legal implications of Nicholas's abdication. Bazili immediately presented to Alekseev his report, in which he stated that although the law did not envision abdication, it stipulated the order of succession to the throne, according to which the oldest son of the emperor should succeed him.²⁷

Nicholas II Accepts Abdication

Ruzskii's conversation with Rodzianko through the Hughes apparatus continued until 7:30 in the morning. Having instructed his aide to awaken him in one hour to report the conversation to the emperor, Ruzskii collapsed in bed, completely exhausted. At 9 o'clock in the morning Lukomskii conveyed Alekseev's order to Danilov to wake up Nicholas 'ignoring all the etiquettes', and to inform him of the contents of the Rodzianko-Ruzskii conversation.²⁸ Ruzskii went to the tsar's salon car at 10 o'clock. The tsar read the text of the conversation, silently stood up, and looked out of the window. There was a dreadful silence. Returning to his desk, he gestured to Ruzskii to sit down, and quietly began. He told Ruzskii that he was born for unhappiness and that even last night he was convinced that no manifesto would help.

He then said:

25 Evert-Klembovskii conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 68.

26 Bazili 1973, p. 121.

27 Ibid., p. 119.

28 The exact time of Ruzskii's report to the tsar is not firmly established. According to Vil'chkovskii, it was about 10:15 a.m.; according to Andrei Vladimirovich, 9:30; according to Martynov, who used archival materials of Spiridovich, 10:45. If Martynov is correct, Ruzskii received Alekseev's telegram before he met the emperor. Vil'chkovskii 1922, p. 177; Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, p. 206; Martynov 1927, p. 152.

If it is necessary that I should abdicate for the good of Russia, I am ready for it. But I am afraid that the people will not understand it. Old Believers would not forgive me for the breach of the oath taken on the day of the Holy Coronation. The Cossacks will blame me for abandoning the front.²⁹

Ruzskii consoled the emperor by saying that there was still hope that the manifesto might settle the situation, and urged the tsar to wait for the instructions from General Alekseev, although he did not conceal Lukomskii's opinion that indicated that the Stavka was already leaning toward the acceptance of abdication. About 10:30, Alekseev's circular telegram finally arrived. Turning pale, Ruzskii read the telegram aloud to the tsar, and then said:

The problem is so serious and so dreadful that I ask Your Majesty to think over this dispatch before answering it. This is a circular telegram. Let us see what the other commanders would say. Then the situation will be clear.³⁰

Nicholas stood up for a lunch break. Attentively and sadly looking at Ruzskii, he said: 'Yes, I have to think'. Declining the luncheon invitation, Ruzskii returned to his headquarters to study closely the instructions from the Stavka and to learn the reactions of the other commanders. After finishing lunch with his entourage in an awkward silence, the emperor walked silently on the platform.

About 2:30, Ruzskii was summoned by the emperor. By this time the telegrams of the commanders had arrived. Having studied their contents, Ruzskii braced himself for the graveness of the meeting with the tsar. This time he asked permission to be accompanied by Iu.N. Danilov and S.S. Savvich. In addition to these three generals, the minister of the imperial court, Count Frederiks, also attended the meeting. The three generals entered the emperor's car. All the windows were closed. Nicholas smoked incessantly.³¹ Ruzskii first made a short routine report about all the telegrams he had received since he left the tsar that morning. When Alekseev's telegram, which included all the answers of the commanders, came up, Ruzskii put the sheaf of telegrams on the desk and asked the tsar to read them for himself.³²

All the generals had answered in favour of abdication. Brusilov outspokenly suggested to the emperor:

29 Vil'chikovskii 1922, p. 178.

30 Ibid.

31 Savvich in Shchegolev 1927, p. 176.

32 Danilov 1928, p. 230.

At the present moment the only solution that could save the situation and make possible the continuation of the struggle with the external enemy ... is the abdication of the throne in favour of the Heir Tsarevich under the regency of Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich.

Evert urged the emperor to accept Rodzianko's declaration 'as the only measure which apparently can halt the revolution and thus save Russia from the horrors of anarchy'. The most damaging telegram to Nicholas was that of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich:

As a faithful subject I consider it necessary, in accordance with the duty as well as the spirit of my oath of allegiance, to implore on my knees Your Imperial Majesty to save Russia and Your Heir, knowing the feeling of Your sacred love to Russia and to Him.

Concluding the point of view of the high command, Alekseev asked Nicholas 'without delay to make a decision, as God inspires you'. He implored,

For the sake of the security and independence of the fatherland, and for the sake of its achievement of victory, please make a decision that will provide a peaceful and satisfactory way out of the situation.³³

Later Sakharov's telegram also arrived. Although upset by 'the small gang of bandits called the State Duma, treacherously exploiting a convenient moment to carry out their criminal designs', Sakharov was nevertheless 'compelled to state that perhaps the least painful solution for the country and for the preservation of the possible chance to fight the external enemy would be to meet the conditions already stated'.³⁴ Admiral Nepenin of the Baltic Fleet replied: 'If this solution is not accepted within the next hours, it will bring about a catastrophe with incalculable calamities for our fatherland'.³⁵

After the tsar finished reading the telegrams, Ruzskii asked him to listen to the opinion of the two other generals who were with him. Nicholas granted Danilov and Savvich permission to express their frank opinions. First, Danilov

33 Alekseev to Nicholas, no. 1878, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, pp. 72–3; Document 94, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 220–1; Browder/Kerensky 1961, pp. 95–6; Steinberg/Khrustalev 1995, pp. 89–91.

34 Sakharov to Ruzskii, no. 03317, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927a, p. 74; Browder/Kerensky 1961, pp. 96–7.

35 Dokumenty Lukomskogo 1922, p. 264; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 97.

stated that he saw no way out except for his abdication. Savvich was entirely confused and simply answered: 'I am a simple person, and therefore, I entirely agree with what was said by General Danilov'.³⁶ For a few minutes there was dead silence. Suddenly, the emperor spoke. 'I have made up my mind. I have decided to abdicate from the throne in favour of my son, Aleksei'. After finishing his words, Nicholas crossed himself. The generals followed his example. The emperor turned to Ruzskii, thanked him for his 'valorous and faithful service', and kissed him.

He then retired to his car, where he wrote two telegrams: one to Alekseev and the other to Rodzianko. To Alekseev he wrote,

In the name of the good, peace, and salvation of Russia, which I passionately love, I am ready to abdicate from the Throne in favour of my son. I ask you all to serve him loyally and sincerely.

The telegram to Rodzianko, however, set one condition for his abdication: 'I am ready to abdicate from the Throne in favour of my son on the condition that he can remain with me until he comes of age'.³⁷

This condition was to result in an unpredictable consequence.

The news of the possibility of Nicholas's abdication angered his entourage, who saw conspiracy and treason in Ruzskii's pressure on the emperor. For the past two days, the entourage felt that the emperor had become a prisoner at the northern front. They bitterly complained that neither Voeikov nor even the emperor was allowed to have access to the Hughes apparatus.³⁸ While Nicholas was meeting with the three generals, the entourage gathered in Voeikov's car. Finally, Count Frederiks returned from the meeting and told them of the abdication. They exploded with anger. Nilov declared that he would arrest Ruzskii and execute him on the spot.³⁹ Voeikov darted off in Nicholas's car. The tsar, showing the piles of telegrams on the desk, said: 'What else can I do, when all have betrayed me? Even Nikolasha [Nikolai Nikolaevich]'.⁴⁰ Voeikov asked where the text of abdication was. Nicholas gave him permission to retrieve the telegrams that he had already given Ruzskii. By this time Ruzskii had already

36 Danilov 1928, p. 231; Savvich in Shchegolev 1927, p. 177.

37 Savvich in Shchegolev 1927, pp. 177–8; Telegrammy Ruszkago 1922, p. 140. Ruzskii later added a phrase: 'under the regency of my brother, Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich'.

38 Voeikov 1936, p. 209; Dubenskii 1922, p. 52.

39 Mordvinov 1923, p. 109; Voeikov 1936, p. 212.

40 Dubenskii 1922, p. 49. But Dubenskii confuses the date. The entourage was outraged with the news of abdication, not with the news of the granting of a responsible ministry.

sent the tsar's telegram to Alekseev, but when he learned that the two delegates of the Duma Committee were headed to Pskov to negotiate with the emperor, he withheld the telegram from Rodzianko. When K.A. Naryshkin, who was dispatched by the entourage to retrieve the telegrams, demanded their return, Ruzskii had an officer of the telegraph section answer that both telegrams had already been dispatched. When the emperor and his entourage learned of this news, someone said, 'It is all over'.⁴¹ Some of the entourage began to weep.

As soon as the Stavka received the emperor's telegram consenting to abdicate, Alekseev entrusted Bazili, of the Stavka's diplomatic chancellery, to write an act of abdication. The draft of the abdication manifesto was approved by Alekseev with minor alterations and quickly sent back to the northern front about 7 p.m. for the approval of the emperor.⁴²

Throughout this momentous drama enacted in Pskov, which determined the fate of the nation, the monarchy, and himself, Nicholas II revealed amazing indifference to the catastrophe that had struck him. In fact, throughout the tragedy of abdication at Pskov Nicholas impressed the participants in the drama with his unemotional serenity at this grave historic moment. Even at this critical juncture, he did not forget decorum when he embraced and said a few kind words to Ruzskii, who played the most active part in bullying Nicholas into accepting his abdication. How was it possible for Nicholas, who had stubbornly refused to make the slightest concession to the liberals' most modest demands for the past two years, to acquiesce so easily and calmly to his own abdication? It appears that external events – the revolution in Petrograd, Moscow and other units of the armed forces – had little impact on Nicholas. Miliukov said, 'The tsar gave the impression of a withdrawn person who has ceased to understand what must be done in order to find a way out of the situation'.⁴³

Nicholas's world was far removed from the real world, which he refused to comprehend. The more complicated internal politics became, and the more vociferous and widespread his critics became, the more Nicholas escaped into his simple, highly personalised notion of autocracy. Thus, when he made the

41 Danilov 1928, pp. 234–5; Mordvinov 1923, pp. 110–11. Kulikov argues that none of the emperor's entourage objected to the concession of a constitutional system. Kulikov 2024b, p. 397. Earlier in the same chapter (pp. 387–9) he argues that the entourage was in favour of a concession to grant a ministry of confidence, responsible to the tsar, but not to the Duma, a 'semi-parliamentarism'. Kulikov does not explain when and how the entourage switched their position from the concession of a ministry of confidence to a responsible ministry.

42 Sworakowski 1971, p. 282.

43 Quoted in Mel'gunov 1961, p. 181.

concession to limit his power by granting a responsible ministry, his world had already been shattered, and he had been defeated. According to Grand Duke Andrei Vladimirovich, it took from nine to twelve-thirty at night to gain the concession of a responsible ministry from the tsar, but it took him only forty-five minutes to agree to his abdication.⁴⁴ Vil'chkovskii also noted that the first round was stormy, but that Ruzskii's audience with the tsar, when he decided on abdication, was marked by Nicholas's air of resignation. Katkov contends that for Nicholas abdication seemed 'a solution far more morally acceptable' than a responsible ministry that restricted his autocratic power.⁴⁵ It seems that abdication was a logical conclusion of the concession of a responsible ministry. He had breached his sacred duty ordained by God and sworn to on his father's deathbed. His personal and moral world had been completely destroyed by this concession. He must have felt compelled to seek absolution of his sin by willingly accepting his abdication.

44 Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, p. 181.

45 Katkov 1967, p. 323.

The Duma Committee's Delegates

Guchkov and Shul'gin Sent to Force Nicholas's Abdication

Early in the morning on 2 March the Duma Committee finally rejected Rodzianko's continued effort to confine the reforms to the establishment of a responsible ministry, and decided to seek Nicholas's abdication. Rodzianko was forced first to cancel his trip to Dno and later to Pskov to meet the tsar. Instead, Guchkov and Shul'gin volunteered to go to present the tsar with the Duma Committee's request to abdicate.

From the Duma Committee's point of view, Guchkov was a perfect emissary for the job. For the past few months he had striven to achieve a palace coup, and once the revolution began, Guchkov's idea of a palace coup quickly gained the support of the majority of the Duma Committee members as the only viable action to stem the tide of the revolution. Nekrasov and Tereshchenko had already been actively involved in Guchkov's plot. Kerenskii was clearly in favour of Nicholas's abdication. Although Konovalov's actions during the February Revolution were shrouded in mystery, Skobelev indicated that at the crucial moment, Konovalov had revealed his views.¹ Thus, we can assume that the Masonic foursome were in favour of Nicholas's abdication, and thus fully supported the core idea of Guchkov's plot. Miliukov and Shul'gin, who had rejected the plot before the revolution, now strongly advocated its implementation.

The Duma Committee, however, did not make the terms for the abdication specific, except for its demand for Nicholas's abdication for his son under the regency of Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich. It did not even discuss a draft act of abdication, which was composed by Shul'gin in a hasty manner on the train while en route to Pskov. The Duma Committee's delegates left

1 Skobelev interview, Lyandres, pp. 172, 179, 185. Konovalov already advocated that the Duma take power on 26 February (p. 172). On the night of 27–8 February, Nekrasov, M.I. Grodzitskii, Efremov, Miliukov, Konovalov and Shul'gin slept in Rodzianko's office, and tried to establish which parts of the city were under government control and which parts were under the control of the insurgents (p. 179). Further, on 2 March Konovalov told Skobelev that he would not join the Provisional Government, unless Kerenskii became the Minister of Justice (p. 185).

Petrograd around 3 a.m. on 2 March.² Since Rodzianko's train had been ready at Warsaw Station, they did not have any trouble in arranging the special train. There were only two passengers in the wagon, Guchkov and Shul'gin, and another wagon, five soldiers, with red armbands for security, accompanied the Duma Committee's delegates.³ But on their way the train stopped at various stations and Guchkov and Shul'gin had to deliver short speeches before the people who gathered on the platforms. Particularly, the train had to stop for a long time at Gatchina and Luga, where the soldiers who had joined the revolution welcomed the Duma delegates with enthusiasm.⁴ Because of these interruptions the Duma Committee's emissaries arrived at Pskov at 9 p.m., two hours later than scheduled.

Guchkov's mission seemed to be an anti-climax after the intense drama of the abdication, which had already been enacted. When Guchkov and Shul'gin departed from Petrograd, they believed that the tsar and the high command were still intent on military suppression of the revolution. It was for the purpose of dissuading General Ivanov from taking military action against the revolution that Guchkov requested an appointment with the general on his way to Pskov.⁵ Both Guchkov and Shul'gin were nervous at the thought of a violent encounter with Nicholas and insurmountable difficulty in obtaining consent for his abdication. The thought of being arrested on the spot might have crossed their minds, but this danger appealed all the more to their sense of heroism. Particularly for Guchkov, the opportunity had finally come to put into practice the idea of a palace coup for which he had conspired. They had no idea that Rodzianko had stolen their thunder by talking directly with Ruzskii, that this conversation had led the military to mount pressure on Nicholas, and that the emperor had already agreed to abdicate.

It bears emphasising that when the Duma Committee decided to send Guchkov and Shul'gin to Pskov, ending the monarchical system was the furthest thing from anyone's minds. Their unanimous consent was to extract the emperor's abdication in favour of his son and to continue the monarchical system with a boy emperor under his uncle's regency.

2 Skobelev interviewed, Lyandres 2013, pp. 188–9. According to Skobelev, the Executive Committee let Guchkov's and Shul'gin's train depart from the Warsaw Station. The regency of Mikhail that was revealed in Miliukov's speech was not yet a hot issue.

3 Startsev 1980, p. 75.

4 Guchkov's letter to Bazilii, quoted in Basily 1973, p. 127; Shul'gin 1925, pp. 243–4.

5 See Chapter 24.

Nicholas Changes His Mind about Abdication

After learning that the Duma Committee's delegates would arrive in Pskov, General Ruzskii withheld the dispatch of the emperor's telegram to Rodzianko and awaited their arrival. Ruzskii wanted to hand this gift to the Duma delegates personally. But his decision to keep the abdication manifesto had far-reaching and unintended consequences. Had he made it public, Nicholas would have had a hard time retreating from his earlier decision to abdicate and transfer the throne to his son, the formula that the Duma Committee had agreed on.⁶

Ruzskii instructed the railway commandant to direct the Duma Committee's delegates to come immediately to him before they went to the emperor. It was necessary for Ruzskii to inform Guchkov and Shul'gin of Nicholas's decision to abdicate. The general wanted to 'salvage as much as possible the prestige of the emperor in such a way that it would show that he had not abdicated under their pressure, but voluntarily before their arrival'.⁷ Also Ruzskii feared that direct pressure from Nicholas's personal enemy might be counterproductive, and contribute to Nicholas changing his mind. The general had already suspected Nicholas of wavering from the repeated attempts by his entourage to retrieve the emperor's telegrams.

The tsar, indeed, had changed his mind on one of the conditions for his abdication, but he had not bothered to tell Ruzskii. After he agreed to abdicate, Nicholas summoned his private physician, Professor Fedorov, and asked for his opinion about the possible length of Aleksei's life. Fedorov frankly answered that given the powerlessness of modern science in curing haemophilia, he was pessimistic about the possibility of a long life for Aleksei. Nicholas remarked that he hoped to stay with his family in Livadia and that he could not part from his son. Since assumption of the throne by Aleksei would make it impossible for Nicholas to live with him, he decided to abdicate not only for himself but also for his son, in favour of his brother, Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich. It was for this reason that Nicholas sent his aide to retrieve his previous telegrams so that he could correct the terms of his abdication.⁸

The Succession Law clearly stipulated that succession to the throne was to be assumed by the eldest son. Nicholas's decision was, therefore, from a strictly legal point of view, illegal.⁹ But his overriding desire to live with his family had priority over legality. Nicholas's inability to separate official state matters from

6 Startsev 1980, p. 95.

7 Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, p. 206.

8 Martynov 1927, p. 160; Gilliard 1921, p. 165.

9 Gronsky 1923, p. 97.

his family matters – a weakness displayed time and again during the war – manifested itself at this crucial junction, when the fate of the dynasty and the fate of the nation were about to be determined by his decision. But some contemporary observers as well historians impugned Nicholas's motivation and saw in this change of heart a secret desire to complicate the situation or even to make a comeback after the storm.¹⁰ It appears unlikely that Nicholas was not aware of the illegality of this succession. All his relatives knew it, and it is impossible to believe that the head of the imperial house was not aware of the succession law. But in view of the great sacrifice he had made by giving up the throne, he felt justified in demanding 'a small concession' to meet his last personal wish. Unable to retrieve the telegrams, Nicholas himself wanted to see the Duma Committee's delegates before they had a chance to talk with Ruzskii. Miliukov commented:

Nicholas II did not wish to risk the fate of his son, preferring to risk his brother and Russia to an unknown future. As always, thinking first of himself and his loved ones, even in this critical moment, and rejecting a course of action which, though painful, was to some degree prepared, he once again laid open the entire question of the monarchy just at the moment when it could only be decided in a negative manner. This was Nicholas II's final act of service to his fatherland.¹¹

Nicholas Meets the Duma Delegates

Upon their arrival Guchkov and Shul'gin were immediately ushered into the emperor's salon car, although they, too, intended to speak with Ruzskii first so as to orient themselves with regard to the tsar's attitude. It is not known who guided them directly to the imperial car, but the emperor's entourage may have played a role in this. In any case, the Duma delegates had no knowledge whatever of the emperor's decision until they faced him. In the salon car they found Count Frederiks and Major General Naryshkin. In a few minutes Nicholas entered in a Cossack uniform. According to Guchkov, 'his expression was calm; as usual his eyes were clear; his gestures tranquil and calculated. There was no trace of agitation'.¹²

10 Miliukov 1955, pp. 314–15; Nabokov 1922, pp. 18–19; Bublikov 1918, p. 27. See Ioffe 1987, p. 77.

11 Miliukov 1978, p. 35.

12 Guchkov's letter to Bazilii, quoted in Basily 1973, p. 127. See also Shul'gin, 1925, p. 267.

After pleasantries were exchanged, Guchkov began. He explained that both Shul'gin and Guchkov were dispatched by the Duma Committee to inform the emperor of the real situation in Petrograd and to give him advice on action that the Duma Committee considered necessary in order for the fatherland to escape from this complicated situation. Guchkov explained: 'The situation is extremely threatening. This is not a result of some conspiracy or premeditated coup, but movement exploded from the very bottom'. The movement had immediately taken an anarchical turn, and to prevent the further spread of anarchy the Duma Committee had been formed. But in addition to the Duma Committee, 'a committee of the workers' party is having a meeting in the Duma and we found ourselves under its influence and its censorship'. The first danger was that anarchy led by these extremists, who espoused the concept of a 'socialist republic', might sweep away the moderate elements. Secondly, the revolution might spread to the armed forces at the front.¹³ He stated that troops dispatched from the front had mutinied and declared their allegiance to the Duma Committee. Ruzskii, who had joined the meeting in the middle of Guchkov's speech, supported Guchkov and declared that the army could no longer afford to send a single soldier from the front for suppression of the revolution.¹⁴ By then it should have been clear to both Ruzskii and Guchkov that the revolt of troops sent from the front had never taken place at Luga, but they both considered it convenient to use this fiction as leverage to put pressure on the tsar. Guchkov then went for the jugular:

The only way out is to transfer the burden of the highest government to other hands. It is possible to save Russia, save the monarchical principle, and save the dynasty if You, Your Majesty, declare that you transfer power to your small son, if You give the regency to Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, and if in your name or in the name of the regent a new government is formed.

Guchkov continued to state that even this solution would not guarantee the successful conclusion of the crisis, since the moderate elements were losing ground to the extremists every moment. He further added that the tsar should think it over before he made up his mind, but he should not wait too long, since

13 Storozhev 1922, p. 139; Mel'gunov 1961, pp. 190–1; Document 97, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 223. Storozhev's account is based on the record taken by Naryshkin. Mel'gunov uses this document.

14 Guchkov's deposition *Padenie* 1926, vo. 6, p. 264; Guchkov's letter to Bazili, quoted in Basili 1973, p. 128.

'we shall not be in a situation to give you any advice, even if you ask us, if too much time were wasted'. Guchkov gave the tsar a deadline: the answer would have to be given by the next day.¹⁵

Ruzskii now belatedly interrupted, and told the Duma Committee's delegates that the emperor had already made that decision, and handed to Nicholas the signed telegram that included the draft version of the manifesto of abdication, the draft manifesto that Nicholas had failed to retrieve. Ruzskii considered it necessary to cut off Guchkov's speech before it went too far. It had already taken an ominous turn toward intimidation. By handing the telegram to the tsar, Ruzskii also hoped to preclude further discussion and force the issue to an end in the way Guchkov had proposed. He was astounded to see Nicholas fold the telegram without reading it aloud to the Duma Committee's delegates and put it in his pocket.¹⁶ Now Nicholas retrieved the original draft of the manifesto securely in his pocket.

Without paying attention to Ruzskii, Nicholas spoke calmly to Guchkov and Shul'gin:

Before your arrival and after General Ruzskii's conversation with the chairman of the State Duma by direct wire, I deliberated during the morning and was ready to abdicate from the throne in favour of my son in the name of good, peace, and the salvation of Russia.

Ruzskii must have felt sick with the premonition that his worst fear would be confirmed. As for Guchkov and Shul'gin, they heard for the first time about the conversation Rodzianko had had with Ruzskii. They must have felt that cunning Rodzianko had stolen their thunder.

The emperor continued:

But now, reconsidering the situation, I have come to the conclusion that because of his illness, I must abdicate at the same time for my son as well as for myself, since I cannot part with him.

He softly added: 'I hope you will understand the feelings of a father'.¹⁷ This answer was so unexpected that the Duma delegates were utterly speechless for

15 Storozhev 1922, p. 140; Mel'gunov 1961, p. 191; Document 97, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 224–5.

16 Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, p. 207.

17 Storozhev 1922, p. 140; Mel'gunov 1961, p. 192; Document 97, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*, p. 225; Shul'gin 1925, p. 269.

a while. They looked at each other incredulously. Guchkov then replied, rather ridiculously: 'We were hoping that the tender age of Aleksei Nikolaevich would have a softening effect on the situation at the transfer of power'. Ruzskii interjected, and reminded the Duma deputies that what the emperor was concerned about was that he would be separated from his son when he succeeded him as the emperor. Shul'gin saved his colleague from making a further embarrassing remark by requesting a recess.¹⁸

This version, widely accepted by historians, met a challenge from Kulikov. The prevailing view is based on the note attributed to Naryshkin, who attended the crucial meeting, and Strozhev, who first introduced this version, exclusively relied on Naryshkin's note. Kulikov argues that Naryshkin's note, without signature, is not reliable. Kulikov argues that Nicholas's change of mind took place during his talk with the Duma delegates. According to Kulikov, Nicholas was prepared to abdicate for his son, and wanted to spend his retirement in the Crimea. Guchkov rejected this proposal, and told him that he would be exiled abroad. Nicholas then requested that his son would join him abroad until he reached his maturity. Guchkov rejected this request as well, saying the new emperor would have to remain in Russia. It was only then that Nicholas decided to abdicate not only for himself but also for his son in favour of his brother.¹⁹

The Delegates Debate How to Respond to Nicholas's Proposal

During the recess, Guchkov at first opposed the emperor's proposal, since 'no one could agree to entrust the fate and the education of the future emperor with those who had brought the country to the present condition'.²⁰ Ruzskii, who also took part in the consultation, asked if it would be possible for the tsar legally to abdicate for his son. But neither knew the answer. The general exploded: 'How could you come here to decide on such an important matter of the state without bringing a single volume of the Fundamental Laws or even

18 Storozhev 1922, pp. 139–40; Mel'gunov 1961, p. 192; Document 97, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*, p. 225. Naryshkin's note cited by Storozhev does not make clear when Shul'gin proposed a recess. There were exchanges about whether Nicholas's abdication would be accepted by the whole Russia and the Duma deputies' explanation about the situation in Petrograd. I described these discussions as coming after the recess.

19 Kulikov 2014b, pp. 400–2. Kulikov cites Mordvinov's memoirs, which referred to Naryshkin rushing to the entourage's car, looking frantically for a copy of the Fundamental Laws. Kulikov, 2014b, p. 401, quoting Mordvinov 1923b, p. 117.

20 Guchkov's deposition, *Padenie* 1926, vol. 6, p. 265.

a jurist!?' Shul'gin lamely justified this oversight by saying that they had not expected such an answer from the emperor. Even so, it was a cardinal and inexcusable oversight on the part of the Duma deputies, who did not even think about bringing a legal expert with them. The formula of Nicholas's abdication in favour of his son under the regency of Mikhail had been the *idée fixe* that had been nurtured by the plotters of a palace coup and widely shared by the liberal circles. No one thought of the possibility of double abdications, and it may be too harsh to blame Guchkov and Shul'gin for their short-sightedness.

It was at this point that Shul'gin argued that the formula proposed by Nicholas should be accepted, for 'whether or not the tsar had the right does not matter'. The most important point at the moment was not the legality of the abdication, but the fact of abdication. Guchkov finally gave in.²¹ We do not know the answer to a counterfactual proposition: what if the Duma Committee refused to accept Nicholas's amended abdications? Would Nicholas then have withdrawn his acceptance to give up the throne? Knowing the emperor's stubbornness and intransigence, Guchkov and Shul'gin must have shuddered, thinking about the expected long negotiations, the outcome of which they could not predict. Also they were well aware that time was precious. Any delay might trigger the anti-Romanov sentiments that had been released by Miliukov's speech at the Tauride Palace on that day.

The Duma Delegates Accept Nicholas's Amended Abdications

The Duma Committee's delegates returned to the tsar's salon car. The emperor wanted to know if there was any guarantee that his abdication would not lead to bloodshed and that the whole of Russia would accept it. The Duma deputies answered that his abdication would have a calming effect on the people. Guchkov, somewhat incongruously, answered that not Nicholas's abdication, but rather the declaration of a republic, would provoke an internecine war. Shul'gin answered that although there were extremists who would not accept the new order and would attempt to fight, they should not fear this, since, judging from the sentiment of Kiev, which he knew best, people were solidly monarchists. How about the Cossacks, Nicholas asked. Guchkov said that the Cossacks would stand for the new order.²²

21 Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, p. 207; Shul'gin 1925, pp. 270–1; Guchkov's letter to Bazili, Bazily 1973, pp. 128–9.

22 Storozhev 1922, p. 141; Document 97, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*, p. 226.

Guchkov then gave the emperor his consent: 'Your Majesty, human feelings of a father have spoken in you, and politics has no place in it. Therefore, we cannot object to your proposal'. Shul'gin hastened to add: 'It is important only that the act of Your Majesty declare that your successor is obligated to give allegiance to the constitution'. Nicholas sarcastically asked him: 'Do you want to think more about it?' Guchkov replied: 'No, I think we can immediately accept your proposal'.²³

The Duma delegates decided to forego their primary mission. Nothing was more political than the transfer of power, especially the highest authority of the Russian Empire and Russian state, and in that decision, a family affair should not play any role. By yielding to Nicholas's filial feelings, Guchkov and Shul'gin exceeded the charge with which the Duma Committee had entrusted them. The Duma deputies did not seem to realise the grave consequences of their concession to Nicholas's amendment for the fate of the monarchy and for the state structure. It was a decision made on the spur of the moment without serious thought of its consequences. The illegality of this succession did not seem to bother them.²⁴ But with this light-hearted decision, the fate of the monarch was sealed. As Startsev argues, the Duma deputies could have insisted on the original formula. They could have promised Nicholas that he and Alexandra could continue to live with their son. The promise would be a promise that could be broken, citing the change in circumstances. Moreover, due to his not having reached adulthood, the boy would not be able to make a decision on his own to abdicate, and no one would have the right to force him to abdicate. But the Duma deputies did not insist on the original formula. And it was Guchkov, rather than Shul'gin, who took the initiative of accepting Nicholas's decision. At this crucial moment, Guchkov, the leader of the conspiratorial palace coup, failed to exercise 'the moral coercion' that he had insisted on for many years, and lent his hands to slay the monarchical system that he wanted to save.²⁵

23 Storozhev 1922, pp. 141–2; Mel'gunov 1961, p. 194; Document 97, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*, p. 226. For Guchkov's and Shul'gin's justification for accepting Nicholas' amendment, see Guchkov 1993, pp. 69–70; A.I. Guchkov, 'Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia: Iz vospominanii A.I. Guchkova', *Poslednie novosti*, September 16, 1930; Ioffe 1987, pp. 77–78; Kulikov 2014c, pp. 400–401. Kulikov argues that Guchkov's plot for a palace coup took the possibility of succession of Mikhail to the emperor into consideration. He further argues that the succession to Mikhail would be more acceptable to the such "republicans" as Tereshchenko and Nekrasov in the plot. Kulikov 2014c, pp. 403–405.

24 Kulikov 2014b, p. 403.

25 For Guchkov's and Shul'gin's justification for accepting Nicholas's amendment, see Ioffe 1987, pp. 77–8.

To Nicholas the whole process must have been intolerably humiliating. The abdication itself was bad enough, but a situation in which his personal enemy should accept its terms added insult to injury, though he must have felt a sense of satisfaction by throwing a monkey wrench back at his sworn opponents. If he felt humiliated, however, he disguised his emotions. He occasionally threw oblique sarcasms at his opponents, but on the whole maintained a quiet dignity throughout the meeting. This struck Guchkov, who later testified:

Such an important act in the history of Russia ... was conducted in such a simple, ordinary form. And I would say that there was such a profoundly tragic lack of understanding of all the events by the very person who was the main character of this scene that I even wondered if we were dealing with a normal person.²⁶

Guchkov, of course, did not know that Nicholas had already been resigned to the necessity of abdication before they came to negotiate with him and that to the emperor who was just about to be deposed, the meeting with the Duma Committee's delegates was nothing more than a ceremony that he had to go through to get the whole odious affair over with. Perhaps Nicholas was determined not to give his conquerors the satisfaction of knowing the depths of his humiliation and disappointment.

Nicholas Signs the Abdication Manifesto

Guchkov then told Nicholas that since they could not stay more than an hour and a half in Pskov, they should have in their hands the signed manifesto of Nicholas's abdication.²⁷ Shul'gin presented his version of the manifesto, but Nicholas offered his draft as a point of departure. That was the draft manifesto that had been composed by Bazili on Alekseev's instructions and sent to Pskov around 7 o'clock in the evening, but handed to the emperor by Ruzskii during the meeting with the Duma delegates. Reading the highly polished, dignified draft, Shul'gin, embarrassed with his own miserable version, immediately withdrew his. Bazili's original formula – Nicholas's abdication in favour of his son, Aleksei, under Mikhail's regency – had been corrected by Nicholas

²⁶ Guchkov's deposition, *Padenie 1926*, vol. 6, pp. 268–9.

²⁷ Shul'gin's two sentence draft manifesto is given in Startsev 1980, p. 73.

to abdicate not only for himself but also for his son.²⁸ Guchkov and Shul'gin requested two changes: first, a phrase should be inserted to the effect that the new emperor would pledge allegiance to the constitution; second, to avoid the impression that the Duma Committee forced Nicholas to abdicate, Shul'gin asked the tsar to write the time of abdication at 3 p.m., when the emperor had made his decision, rather than the actual time when the manifesto was finally signed, at 11:48 p.m.

The draft manifesto stated that Russia was going through the difficult time of war, when national unity was most needed and internal popular disturbances were threatening this unity. It went on to say:

In these decisive days in the life of Russia We deem it Our duty in conscience to help Our people [to keep] the close and unbroken unity of all popular forces for the speedy achievement of the victory and in agreement with the State Duma We consider it best to abdicate from the throne of the Russian state and to renounce the supreme power.

It is important to stress that the abdication manifesto emphasised the agreement with the State Duma. But what followed from this was a surprise and the most problematical act on the emperor's part:

Not wishing to be separated from Our beloved son, We hand Our succession to Our brother, Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, and bless him for ascending on the throne of the Russian State, and enjoin Our brother to rule the state affairs in the complete and unbroken unity with the representatives of the people in the legislative institutions on the foundations on which they were established, taking in the inviolable oath in the name of [Our] passionately beloved homeland.²⁹

Here again, Nicholas stressed the unity with the legislative power, which was the State Duma, but it is also important to note that he did not use the word 'constitution', as Shul'gin had requested.³⁰ Perhaps Nicholas refused to use that cursed word he hated to the last moment.

²⁸ Sworakowski 1971, p. 282.

²⁹ 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 142–3; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 277, pp. 286–7; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 104; Steinberg/Khrustalev 1995, pp. 100–2. See a facsimile copy of the abdication manifesto, Steinberg/Khrustalev, p. 101.

³⁰ Startsev 1980, p. 102.

Nicholas made two appointments as the decree of the Senate before he signed the abdication manifesto: appointments of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich as the new commander-in-chief, and Prince G.E. L'vov as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers.³¹ Nicholas accepted these requests without protest, and signed the manifesto. Thus ended Nicholas II's twenty-three year reign.

On that night, Nicholas, the 'former' emperor of the Russian Empire, left Pskov for Mogilev at 1 a.m. on 3 March. Yet again he was on a railway journey, this one for nineteen hours. It was in the middle of this journey when he received the news of Mikhail's renunciation of the throne.

Nicholas's personal reaction, his internal turmoil and his perception of events that forced his abdication are left for the speculations of historians. He did not reveal his opinions and feelings either in his letters or in his diary. On the day of his abdication, he wrote in his diary:

March 2. Thursday. In the morning, Ruzskii came and read to me the long conversation by direct wire with Rodzianko. In his words, Petrograd was in such a state that a cabinet [formed] from the members of the State Duma will be powerless to do anything, for the SR-Socialist-Democratic parties are competing with it in the form of a workers' committee. My abdication is necessary. Ruzskii transmitted this conversation to Alekseev in the Stavka and to all General Headquarters. At 12:30 the answers came. For the salvation of Russia and the preservation of the army at the front, I decided to take this step. I conceded, and from the Stavka a draft for the manifesto was sent. In the evening, from Petrograd came Guchkov and Shul'gin, with whom I had a talk and to whom I handed the manifesto, which was drawn up and signed. At one o'clock at night I left Pskov with gloomy feelings.

Treachery, cowardice, and deception all around.³²

The news of Nicholas's abdication reached Tsarskoe Selo on 3 March. Busy with nursing the sick children in the palace, Alexandra did not know until 11 o'clock in the morning, when Grand Duke Pavel Aleksandrovich brought the news to her. None of her entourage had had the courage to tell her. Alexandra received the grand duke in a hospital nurse's uniform. When Pavel broke the news, 'the

31 Stozhev 1922, p. 142; Document 43, 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 141–2; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 276. This appointments were conveniently dated at 2 p.m. on 2 March, one hour before he was supposed to have signed the manifesto.

32 *Dnevnik Nikolaia Romanova* 1927, p. 136; Document 98, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 227–8; Steinberg/Khrustalev 1995, p. 107.

Empress trembled and bent down her head, as though she were uttering a prayer'. Then she burst into tears.³³ But without a moment's hesitation, she accepted her husband's decision. She wrote to her husband: 'My heart is broken by the thought that you were in complete isolation, suffering all these tortures and disturbances, and we don't know anything about you and you do not know anything about us'. Then she added:

Two tendencies – the Duma and the revolution – two snakes, which, as I hope, will cut off each other's head, and this would save the situation ... Rodzianko does not mention about you. But when they find out that they did not allow you to go, the troops will come in fury and revolt against everything. They think that the Duma wants to be with you and for you. Oh well, let them restore order and show that they can be proud of something, but they have poured too much oil on the fire, and how are they going to put it out?³⁴

As it turned out, the Duma and the revolution cut off each other's head, but this did not save her life and her family.

33 Paley n.d., pp. 60–1; Benckendorff 1927, pp. 16–17.

34 Perepiska 1927, vol. 5, pp. 226–7; Document 100, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 228–9.

PART 6

The Formation of the Provisional Government and the Birth of Dual Power

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The Formation of the Provisional Government

Power Struggle in the Duma Committee and the Question of Legitimacy

The Duma Committee decided to take power on the evening of 27 February. But it did not proclaim itself as a provisional government. As previous chapters indicate, the Duma Committee functioned as a quasi-revolutionary government, taking revolutionary actions, partly to meet the needs dictated by the circumstances, and partly out of its eagerness to overthrow 'the old regime'. As Startsev argues, however, most of its members considered the Duma Committee a 'necessary, but short-term transitional form on the way to creating a real government'.¹ Only on the night of 1 to 2 March did the Duma Committee decide to form the provisional government. But when the provisional government was created, its composition was significantly different from that of the Duma Committee. The delay of its formation and the differences in composition between the Duma Committee and the provisional government resulted from the intense power struggle among the liberals and the question of the legitimacy of the provisional government – the question integrally connected with this struggle.

The question of the provisional government's legitimacy involved three crucial issues: the policy toward the revolution, the policy toward the monarchy, and its relations with the Duma Committee and the State Duma. It was here that the dilemma of the liberals during the war was most vividly revealed. They had stood between revolution and tsarism during the preceding years and, sensing the approaching storm from below, had tried in vain to convince the tsar of the necessity of implementing internal reforms. Met with intransigent rejection of their demands, some liberals had sought to utilise the revolutionary movement and others had plotted a palace coup to force the tsarist government to accept their demands. But a majority of the liberals led by Miliukov had stubbornly refused to take either course for fear that such action by the liberals might induce the outbreak of a revolution.

The mass revolt that began on 23 February and culminated in the soldiers' insurrection on 27 February completely changed the situation. The revolu-

1 Startsev 1980, p. 54.

tion that they had feared all along had actually taken place. A dual task was suddenly thrust on them: the overthrow of the old regime and containment of the revolution within reasonable limits. It was the revolution that granted the Duma Committee the authority to enforce its will. From the moment it decided to seize power on the evening of 27 February, it was clear that the future liberal government would seek a source of legitimacy in the revolution itself. But the liberals' goal of keeping the revolutionary process within acceptable limits and restoring order proved contradictory to the aspirations of the insurgent masses. Furthermore, their conscious effort to keep a distance from the mass movement during the preceding years rendered them ineffective at the crucial moment, and most of the insurgents, especially the insurgent soldiers, refused to endorse the liberals as the sole representatives of the revolution. Therefore, the liberals needed the support of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, which they expected to serve as a bridge connecting the deep gulf between the future Provisional Government and the insurgent masses – a function that the Executive Committee was more than willing to perform.

But the revolution was not the only source of legitimacy that the liberals sought for the future government. They finally activated Guchkov's plot for a palace coup, which they had rejected before. To the majority of the liberals Rodzianko's attempt to limit the change to a ministry of confidence at first, and then to a responsible ministry, seemed inadequate to close the floodgate of the revolution. They thus advocated Nicholas's abdication. But it was not as a revolutionary government that the liberals forced Nicholas to abdicate, but in the context of a palace coup – within the framework of the old regime. Nicholas not only agreed to abdicate, but also granted Prince L'vov the permission to form a government. In other words, the liberals attempted to gain sanction for the provisional government from the tsar. The simultaneous pursuit of legitimacy from the revolution as well as from the old regime was logically, politically and legally impossible and was doomed to fail.²

The third question was the provisional government's relationship with the State Duma, and the Duma Committee that grew out of the State Duma. Should the provisional government derive its legitimacy from the State Duma and the Duma Committee? If so, the provisional government would be considered to be an executive power responsible to the State Duma as the legislative power, and would function on the basis of the Fundamental Laws that had existed

2 For the discussion of legitimacy of the provisional government, see Hasegawa 1972, pp. 622–32.

within the old regime. But the provisional government could completely sever its ties with the State Duma, and reject the Fundamental Laws, treating them as remnants of the old regime. In that case, the provisional government would assume both executive, legislative, and possibly judicial powers as well, with dictatorial power, responsible to no institutions. In that case, the question remains as to what legal basis should be established until the Constituent Assembly was convened.

As Startsev notes, within the Duma Committee there existed two different views on the future of the government. Miliukov and his supporters advocated for the formation of the provisional government without any formal ties with the State Duma and the Duma Committee. In contrast, Rodzianko wished to preserve the State Duma to be the centre of the future government. The Duma Committee should serve as its executive committee, and the future provisional government should serve merely as the executive power, responsible to the Duma as the legislative power. These two different concepts of the future government were integrally connected with the power struggle between Miliukov and Rodzianko for the leadership of the future government.³

The struggle for the nature of the future provisional government must be put in the context of the liberal opposition during the war. After the crisis in the summer of 1915, various opposition circles had compiled a list of the possible ministries of confidence.⁴ One of the most important disagreements among the liberals prior to the February Revolution was whether Rodzianko or Prince L'vov should head the ministry of confidence. In August 1915, Rodzianko was accepted as a possible candidate even by the Progressists. But as the relationship between the liberals and the tsar became increasingly strained in 1916, Rodzianko's moderation and conservatism disillusioned the Progressive Bloc, which had come to support Prince L'vov as a more suitable candidate. By the time the February Revolution broke out, the Progressive Bloc and the Kadet Party preferred Prince L'vov over Rodzianko to head the government. From Miliukov's point of view, L'vov had another advantage: having no connection with the Duma, he would be a good candidate to push in opposition to the influence of the Duma. Thus, when Grand Duke Mikhail suggested the name of Prince L'vov to head the government, instead of Rodzianko, Miliukov and the Progressive Bloc were exerting influence in the political struggle already – as early as 27 February.

3 Startsev 1980, pp. 54–5. See Chapter 29 for more detailed discussion.

4 For various lists concerning the potential ministry of confidence, see Hasegawa 1981, 522–4; Mel'gunov 1931, pp. 171–2, 176, Chermenskii 1976, p. 98; Diakin 1967, p. 291.

The process by which the provisional government was formed was closely related to two crucial issues: the question of the monarchy and its relationship with the Petrograd Soviet. For the first two days after the insurrection Rodzianko's prestige was boosted to its height. As chairman of the Duma and the Duma Committee, he pursued a policy of moderation in the name of the Duma Committee. At first he pursued the policy of seeking the emperor's concession to the establishment of a ministry of confidence. As the revolution expanded, he stepped up the demand to establish a responsible ministry headed by himself. Although his attempt to use the grand dukes' influence was not successful, his campaign to the military leaders yielded the desired results. But his personal campaign for a responsible ministry headed by himself provoked suspicion from his Duma Committee colleagues, especially from Miliukov. In the meantime, Rodzianko's order to the soldiers irretrievably damaged his prestige in the eyes of the insurgents. The other members of the Duma Committee believed that his participation in the provisional government would make its relationship with the Soviet and the insurgent masses extremely difficult.⁵

But Rodzianko continued to negotiate independently with the military leaders. His middle-of-the-road approach and independent action caused the other members of the Duma Committee to suspect that he was plotting to make himself dictator with the help of the military and through a secret bargain with the tsar. As discussed in Chapter 23, Rodzianko's attempted trip to Dno to meet the tsar was suspected by his colleagues to be a part of his manoeuvre.⁶

The connection of the Petrograd Soviet's influence and the monarchical question for the formation of the provisional government was demonstrated by the Soviets' intervention at midday of 1 March to prevent Rodzianko's trip to Dno. The action of the Petrograd Executive Committee was motivated by its fear that Rodzianko would conspire with the military leaders to suppress the revolution. But this interference helped Miliukov to undermine Rodzianko's influence. Miliukov feared that, had Rodzianko met the tsar, Nicholas would most likely have appointed the Chairman of the Duma to head the new Council of Ministers. This would diminish the chance of forming a government from the Progressive Bloc, headed by L'vov.⁷

By 1 March various liberal organisations put pressure on the Duma Committee to form a provisional government. On 1 March, the Central War Industries Committee meeting, which was also attended by representatives of various lib-

5 Shul'gin 1925, p. 225.

6 Miliukov 1955, pp. 274–5.

7 Startsev 1980, p. 58.

eral organisations, passed a resolution calling for 'the immediate organisation of civil and military power'. The resolution stated:

Such power of the provisional administration must be single, firm, and authoritative in the eyes of the army and the entire country and can originate from the only centre of entire Russia – the State Duma.⁸

The call for a government that was to be associated with the Duma was a dangerous threat to Miliukov. He had to hasten the formation of the provisional government without associations with the Duma and the Duma Committee, and without Rodzianko. Miliukov achieved his goal by two means. For that purpose, he created the provisional government separate from the Duma Committee and the State Duma, and he removed Rodzianko's name from its composition. Anxious to get rid of Rodzianko's influence, Miliukov and his colleagues were ready to write off the Duma as a 'shadow of the past'.

After Rodzianko's influence had begun to decline, the Kadet party managed to assume the leadership of the Duma Committee. The Central Committee of the Kadet party decided to place itself at the disposal of the Duma Committee and instructed its members to compose a list of persons who could assist to extend the influence of the Kadet Party. This amounted to a virtual takeover of the Duma Committee. On 2 March, the Central Committee decided to demand Nicholas's unconditional abdication and advocated the immediate proclamation of the official composition of the provisional government.⁹

Miliukov Composes the List of the Provisional Government

Within the Duma Committee itself the demand for the formation of a provisional government was raised on 1 March. According to Miliukov, 'It was necessary to hasten the final formation of a government. In view of this, by 1 March the Provisional Committee [the Duma Committee] initiated the composition of the cabinet, to which it should transfer its power'.¹⁰ After the negotiations with the Soviet Executive Committee members during the night of 1 and 2 March, the Duma Committee discussed the need for the formation of a provisional government. While the others were bustling about, Miliukov was

8 RGIA, f. 1278, op. 5, d. 1252, l. 3.

9 Diakin 1967, p. 346.

10 Miliukov 1921, p. 45.

compiling the list of ministers at the corner of the Duma Committee's room: this roster of ministers was born 'from the head of Miliukov'.

The Duma Committee's record noted that the work that had been done by the Duma Committee was deemed inadequate in controlling the ministries.¹¹ The reason for the formation of a provisional government suggested here is strange, since the Duma Committee had already appointed its commissars to all the ministries and government institutions. According to another document, at the meeting on the night of 1 to 2 March the Duma Committee decided:

to organise a governmental power by forming a provisional societal [*obshchestvennyi*] Council of Ministers until the Constituent Assembly determines the form of government, for the purpose of preventing anarchy and for restoring public peace after the overthrow of the old state order.¹²

This document shows that the provisional government was formed on 2 March exactly for the same purposes for which the Duma Committee had been created in the early hours of 28 February. But the goals allegedly set for the provisional government were besides the point. This decision engineered by the Kadet Party and Miliukov was meant to establish the provisional government, independent of the Duma and Duma Committee, and without Rodzianko. This was a huge victory for Miliukov.

The Duma Committee approved the list composed by Miliukov on 1 March. This list consisted of the following: Prince G.E. L'vov (chairman of the Council of Ministers and minister of internal affairs), Miliukov (minister of foreign affairs), Guchkov (minister of war and navy), Kerenskii (minister of justice), Chkheidze (minister of labour), Nekrasov (minister of transport), Tereshchenko (minister of finance), Shingarev (minister of agriculture), Konovalov (minister of trade and industry), A.A. Manuilov (minister of education), I.V. Godnev (state comptroller), and V.N. L'vov (procurator of the holy synod).¹³

¹¹ 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 131.

¹² Document 52, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 153–4.

¹³ 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 134; Shul'gin 1925, pp. 210–11, 223; Krivosheina 1931, p. 131.

Members of the Provisional Government

Prince L'vov, Miliukov and Guchkov

Prince L'vov had emerged as a hero of the opposition through his activities in the Union of Zemstvos. When the Duma had remained inactive in its struggle with the tsarist government, L'vov had often spoken out sharply. At the end of 1916, he became involved in a plot to stage a palace coup, although the plot was deadlocked at the initial stage. From the end of 1915 he was mentioned by various opposition groups as a possible candidate to head the ministry of confidence. At the end of December 1916, and at the beginning of January 1917, Klopov, in agreement with Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, had petitioned the tsar for the formation of a ministry of confidence headed by Prince L'vov.¹⁴ When the February Revolution broke out, L'vov was in Moscow, but at the request of Miliukov he arrived in Petrograd on 1 March, and was seen in the Tauride Palace on this day. By the evening of 1 March it became clear to the members of the Duma Committee that L'vov would head the provisional government.¹⁵

During the crucial three days from 1 to 3 March, however, L'vov left no distinct impression on the events. A Kadet, Nabokov, who became the secretary of the Provisional Government, remarked, 'He sat in the driver's box, but did not even try to pick up the reins'.¹⁶ But it was precisely because of his lack of dynamic personality that Miliukov chose L'vov rather than Rodzianko. L'vov was meant to be a figurehead, and Miliukov expected to establish himself as undisputed leader of the provisional government. In addition, L'vov's lack of connection with the Duma was an additional advantage for Miliukov, who wanted to destroy the prestige of the Duma. According to Savich, 'L'vov was a person foreign to the Duma; it [the Duma] did not know him, and he did not know it, and he did not trust it'.¹⁷ But Miliukov was eventually to be disappointed. He wrote in his memoirs: '[His] indecisiveness ... caused my disappointment. We did not know "whose" he would be, but we felt that he was not "ours"'.¹⁸

14 See Chapter 10; Polner 1932, p. 225. According to Miliukov, 'By an agreement made even before the collapse of the monarchy Prince G.E. L'vov was designated as the head of the first revolutionary government'. Miliukov 1978, p. 30. Miliukov did not mention anything about Rodzianko.

15 Engel'gardt, 'Potonuvskii mir: Vospominaniia', OR RNB, f. 218, l. 114.

16 Quoted in Miliukov 1955, p. 299.

17 Savich 1993, p. 225.

18 Miliukov 1955, p. 302. It is not clear what Miliukov meant by this. One possibility is that

The appointments of Miliukov and Guchkov as minister of foreign affairs and of war and navy respectively were natural choices. Miliukov, known as an expert on foreign relations, had close connections with diplomats, and had been selected by the opposition groups as a suitable candidate for the post. Guchkov, who had contributed to military reforms as a member of the military committee of the Third Duma, was the chairman of the Central War Industries Committee, and had co-chaired with Engel'gardt as the head of the Military Commission of the Duma Committee. He had established close relationships with the officers of the General Staff and the Naval Staff in Petrograd. On 1 March he was busy visiting regimental barracks in the attempt to restore order in the military units.

Kerenskii as a Link with the Petrograd Soviet

One of the most striking features of the composition of the provisional government was the inclusion of two socialists, Kerenskii and Chkhaidze. Aware of the impossibility of liberals persuading the workers to obey the provisional government's orders, Miliukov created a new ministry dealing with labour and offered this post to the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, Chkhaidze. He hoped that through the mediation of the Petrograd Soviet the provisional government, with the appearance of a coalition government, composed of the representatives of the Duma Committee and the Petrograd Soviet, could achieve peace with the workers. But Chkhaidze, faithful to the Executive Committee's decision not to participate in the 'bourgeois' government, declined to accept the post.

In contrast to Chkhaidze, Kerenskii was at home with the Duma Committee, although he held the position of vice-chairman of the Petrograd Soviet.¹⁹ Kerenskii was offered the post of minister of justice, pushing aside a more capable right-wing Kadet, Vasilii Maklakov, who had already been working as a commissar to the ministry of justice. Kerenskii was well aware that 'in Duma circles it was considered imperative that I be included in the Provisional Government'.²⁰ According to Rodzianko, Kerenskii 'had to be included in the composition of the cabinet in view of the demands of the democratic elements, without whose consent there was no possibility either to restore even the likeness of order or to establish a popular government'. Unlike Chkhaidze, Kerenskii wanted to be a minister. But on the same day the ministerial post was offered, the

Miliukov was insinuating the influence of Masonic ties. For Prince L'vov, see Startsev 1980, pp. 116–17.

19 Kerensky 1927, p. 29.

20 Ibid., p. 57.

Soviet Executive Committee decided that no socialists should take part in the new cabinet.²¹ What the provisional government wanted was not merely Kerenskii's personality, but his link with the Soviet. Also to exert influence in the provisional government, Kerenskii had to join the cabinet as a 'hostage of the revolution'.

He began carefully preparing a way out of this dilemma. During the negotiations between the Duma Committee and the Soviet Executive Committee on the conditions for the transfer of power Kerenskii took no part in the discussion – although he sat in on negotiations – lest he should be embroiled in a conflict between the two sides.

The Executive Committee's decision seemed to Kerenskii absurd, and he described his dilemma.²² To him the night of 1 to 2 March was the most painful night he had ever experienced. After lying in a semiconscious state, he suddenly found an escape. The decision of the Executive Committee was not final, but had to be ratified by the general session of the Soviet on 2 March. He decided to appeal to the delegates directly, ignoring the Executive Committee's decision. As soon as he thought of this solution, he telephoned Miliukov and accepted the post in the provisional government.²³

Masonic Influence on the Provisional Government

Another curious feature of the provisional government was the inclusion of Tereshchenko as minister of finance. His name had not been mentioned in any list of candidates for the ministry of confidence before. Miliukov himself, who composed the list of the cabinet members, curiously cast doubt on how some of the names on this list came to be included. He wrote in his memoirs:

On what 'list' did he [Tereshchenko] 'come into' the Ministry of Finance? I did not know then that the source was the same one from which Kerenskii had a post thrust upon him, from which the republicanism of our Nekrasov came, and from which also the unexpected radicalism of the Progressists, Konovalov and Efremov, came. About this source I learned much later.²⁴

In another book, he alleged that Tereshchenko and Nekrasov were included in this list because of their personal intimacy with Kerenskii and because of

21 Rodzianko 1922, p. 29; Polner 1932, pp. 232–3; see Chapter 21.

22 Kerensky 1927, p. 53.

23 Ibid., p. 59; Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 232–3.

24 Miliukov 1955, pp. 311–12.

their proximity to the conspiratorial circles that prepared the revolution.²⁵ But Miliukov did not clearly spell out what kind of conspiratorial organisation it was. We now know that it was the Masonic organisation of which Kerenskii, Nekrasov, Konovalov and possibly Tereshchenko were important members. According to Katkov, Prince L'vov had personal connections with this group, though he was not formally a member.

Katkov emphasised the importance of the Freemasons in the provisional government, and argues as if the entire provisional government was the product of a conspiracy on their part.²⁶ Certainly, four (Kerenskii, Nekrasov, Konovalov and Tereshchenko) out of the eleven-member cabinet constituted a large block. But the lack of evidence makes it virtually impossible to make an intelligent conclusion on the role played by the Masonic element during the February Revolution. It is known that these four were a part of it, but was the pressure Katkov refers to exerted by the organisation as a whole or by individual initiative? Did they meet one another during the February Revolution? If they did, where and what decisions did they make? Were the other members, Kuskova and Prokopovich, for instance, involved in the 'conspiracy'? How exactly did they put pressure on Miliukov, who compiled the list of the cabinet members? Katkov offers no answers to these questions, and the existing evidence provides no clues, either. We know little about Kerenskii's and Nekrasov's activities during the revolution, and on Konovalov's activities there is nothing at all.

On the other hand, an argument could be made to minimise the significance of the Masonic influence on the selection of the cabinet ministers. If there was a conspiracy by the Masonic organisation, it is difficult to explain why Efremov's name, which was included on the Progressists' list in August 1915, was withdrawn. Kerenskii was chosen not because he was a Mason, but because he was needed as a link between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet. Konovalov had been on everyone's list for minister of trade and industry, and his selection seemed to have little to do with his Masonic ties, as Katkov admits. Nekrasov's appointment to the post of minister of transport was not unexpected, either. His name had been mentioned already for that post on the Progressists' list in August 1915. Nekrasov had been consistently arguing

25 Miliukov 1921, pp. 45–6; Miliukov 1978, pp. 30–1. Describing a hitherto little-known biography of Tereshchenko, Lyandres challenged Miliukov's contention that Tereshchenko was a little-known public figure. Lyandres also maintains that his membership with the Masonic organisation has not been proven. Lyandres 2013, pp. 245–9.

26 Katkov 1967, pp. 163–74, 377–83.

for the necessity of making an alliance with the mass movement. The liberals' acceptance of the revolution vindicated his argument, and Nekrasov's appointment reflected the relative increase of strength of the left-wing liberals. Also the deposed commissar of transport of the Duma Committee, Bublikov, may have been associated too closely with Rodzianko.

That leaves only Tereshchenko, whose appointment may be questioned as strange. But Tereshchenko was not unknown, as Miliukov unfairly indicated in his memoirs. He was the chairman of the Kiev War Industries Committee, and had been actively involved in the political activities of the Central War Industries Committee. From the end of 1916, he had lived in Petrograd, officially working for Guchkov at the Central War Industries Committee, but secretly involved in Guchkov's conspiracy for a palace coup with Nekrasov.²⁷ In fact, Miliukov had some difficulty in finding a good candidate for finance minister. Shingarev, an acknowledged expert on food supply, who had been mentioned often for the post of finance minister, was more needed for the post of minister of agriculture.²⁸ Masonic ties aside, it is possible to think of two important factors that contributed to Tereshchenko's appointment. The first was geographical. The provisional government needed someone to represent the south of Russia. Another might be the influence of the War Industries Committees. The Central War Industries Committee had put pressure on the Duma Committee to form the provisional government, and it is conceivable that its delegates might have pushed Tereshchenko's candidacy. But definitive conclusions on the role of the Masonic organisation in the selection of the members of the provisional government cannot be drawn at this stage of historical research.

Miliukov Announces the Formation of the Provisional Government

So far, preparations for the creation of the provisional government had been made in secrecy. But by the early morning of 2 March, the liberals had solved one part of the question of legitimacy. They had reached agreement with the Soviet Executive Committee on the transfer of power, and the Duma Committee's delegates were on the way to Pskov to force Nicholas's abdication. Therefore it was necessary to break the news of the formation of the provisional government to the masses. Miliukov decided to test their reaction by inform-

27 Startsev 1980, p. 60. See also Lyndres 2013, pp. 245–50, 272–8; Ioffe 1987, p. 64.

28 Shul'gin 1925, pp. 273–4.

ally announcing the creation of the provisional government to the crowds who were still gathering in the Ekaterina Hall of the Tauride Palace.²⁹

He began with attacks on the old regime and announced that the first cabinet of society (*obshchestvennyi*) was being formed. He stressed the necessity of organising the revolutionary forces under the new government and the unity of the people, particularly the unity between soldiers and officers. According to Miliukov, this speech was welcomed with enthusiasm, but Sukhanov stated that a substantial part of the audience was hostile and that the speaker sometimes found himself in difficulty.

When Miliukov announced the formation of the provisional government, one of the audiences shouted: 'Who elected you?' Miliukov answered,

No one elected us, for if we began to wait for popular elections, we could not have wrung the power from the hands of the enemy. While we were arguing whom to elect, the enemy would have succeeded in organising itself and won over you and us. *It was the Russian Revolution that elected us* [italics by TH].

Although the Duma Committee had virtually acted as a revolutionary power, and its members had delivered speeches praising the activities of the insurgents, it was the first time that the leader of the provisional government explicitly acknowledged that the provisional government was created by the revolution and would stand for the revolution. According to Miliukov, 'This simple reference to the historical process that had led us to power shut the mouths of the most radical opponents. This was later often cited as the canonical source of our power'. In his memoirs, Miliukov justifies his words by saying that the revolution was the only conceivable source of power, since the majority of the Duma Committee members believed that under the new circumstances the Duma was no longer a viable institution.³⁰ Miliukov had, indeed, travelled very far in a few days – from the staunch moderate who had adamantly refused to align himself with the revolutionary forces to the new position of accepting the revolution.

29 For Miliukov's speech see 'Rech' P.N. Miliukova o novom pravitel'stve', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistsov*, No. 6, 2 March 1917, p. 1; Miliukov 1921, pp. 51–2; Miliukov 1955, pp. 310–12; Sukhanov, 1923, pp. 321–8. The entire speech is given in 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 282–6; Document 53, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 154–9; for a shorter version of the speech, see 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 135.

30 Miliukov 1955, pp. 303–11.

But how about the Duma, and the Duma Committee from which the provisional government was created? Miliukov continued his speech:

We remember too well that we ourselves not long ago defended the principle of a power responsible to the representatives of the people, [but] we will not maintain this power for a minute after representatives freely elected by the people will tell us that they want to see in our places different people who will better serve their trust.

It is undeniable that he meant to downgrade the authority of the Duma as not truly representative of the people.³¹

Miliukov continued his speech. After promising that the new government would convene the Constituent Assembly, he began to introduce the names of the ministers of the provisional government. He first introduced Prince L'vov to head the provisional government. Immediately a voice was raised, 'The privileged class!' To placate the masses, Miliukov hastened to introduce the name of Kerenskii. 'I am happy to tell you that also the nonprivileged class has its representative in our ministry. I have just received the acceptance of my colleague, A.F. Kerenskii, to occupy a post in the first Russian cabinet of society'. Kerenskii's name was welcomed with enthusiastic applause. The speaker next told the audience that Miliukov himself was entrusted with the ministry of foreign affairs. This announcement was also welcomed with 'stormy and prolonged applause, growing into an ovation for the speaker', who bowed in all directions. Miliukov solemnly swore that while he was in office confidential matters would not fall into the hands of the enemy – a reminder that he had made the famous 'Stupidity or Treason' speech. The speaker expected to have some opposition to the war minister, and he slightly distorted the truth so that the audience might accept the name of Guchkov. 'While I am speaking to you in this hall, Guchkov is in the streets of the capital organising our victory'. Actually, at this moment Guchkov was on his way to Pskov to force the tsar to abdicate. Then Miliukov introduced the names of Konovalov and Tereshchenko. The audience asked 'Who is Tereshchenko?' Miliukov answered, 'Yes, ladies and gentlemen, this is a famous name in southern Russia. Russia is vast and it is hard to know everywhere the names of all our best people'. He quickly introduced the rest of the names of the cabinet. Miliukov must have felt relieved to see

31 For a different interpretation, see Nikolaev 2005, p. 553. Nikolaev believes that his speech makes the relationship between the provisional government and the Duma Committee intentionally ambiguous.

that the list of the names of the provisional government was accepted with little opposition from the audience.

But trouble came from a different direction. Someone in the audience wanted to know what programme the provisional government intended to pursue. Miliukov stressed the agreement that the provisional government had reached with the representatives of the Soviet Executive Committee as a result of an all-night conference. He was about to begin an explanation of the programme when someone interrupted him: 'How about the dynasty?' This was the question he preferred to avoid, but since it was asked, Miliukov for the first time revealed the policy of the Duma Committee and the provisional government concerning the monarchy. Miliukov declared: 'power will be transferred to the regent, Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich. Aleksei will be the successor'. According to a reporter who happened to be at the Ekaterina Hall, there were 'prolonged bursts of indignation, exclamations: 'Long live the republic', 'Down with the dynasty!' Weak applause was drowned out by new bursts of indignation'.³² They shouted, 'This is the old dynasty!' Miliukov tried to placate the outraged masses:

Yes, gentlemen, you don't like the old dynasty. I may not like it, either. But now the question is not who likes what. We cannot leave the question of the constitution of the state without making a decision. We can see it as a parliamentary, constitutional monarchy. Perhaps others see it differently, but if we start arguing about this now instead of reaching an immediate decision, then Russia will find herself in a state of civil war that will only revive the ruined regime. Neither you nor we have the right to do this. However, this does not mean we have solved the problem for good. You will find a point in our programme, in accordance to which, as soon as the dangers disappear and order is securely restored, we will proceed to preparations for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly which will be convened on the basis of universal, direct, equal, and secret suffrage.

Cleverly, Miliukov had shifted from the dynastic question to the issue of a Constituent Assembly. He was loudly applauded there. When he finished his speech, the excited audience lifted Miliukov high in the air several times, and

32 'Rech' P.N. Miliukova o novom pravitel'stve', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, No. 6, 2 March 1917, p. 1; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 285.

carried him out of Ekaterina Hall.³³ Yet, the question remained unresolved as to what 'a parliamentary constitutional monarchy' meant. Did he mean that the parliamentary constitutional monarchy would have to be instituted only after the Constituent Assembly? Or was the provisional government to be such a system until the convocation of the Constitutional Assembly? If so, what was to be the relationship between the provisional government and the State Duma?

Although Miliukov's speech was generally well received, one of the most important points of the policy of the provisional government, the question of the monarchical system, provoked a violent reaction from the audience. It was in Ekaterina Hall of the Tauride Palace that the intention of the provisional government to obtain dual legitimacy – from both the revolution and the old regime – faced its most critical challenge. The news of the retention of the monarchical system spread quickly. According to Sukhanov, tens of thousands of people stood outside the Tauride Palace and demanded to see some delegates from the Soviet Executive Committee to inquire about the programme of the provisional government with regard to the preservation of the old dynasty.³⁴ Although Sukhanov's account might be a slight exaggeration, it appears certain that Miliukov's revelation touched off violent actions by the insurgents against the privileged class in general and by soldiers against officers in particular.

The archival materials of the Duma Committee indicate that on 2 March there was a sudden increase of soldiers searching and plundering apartments occupied by officers and members of the privileged class. Soldiers arrested those officers they considered monarchists and hounded out those hiding in hotels and in the apartments of their acquaintances. On 2 March the commandant of the Petropavlovsk Fortress requested the Duma Committee's intervention to prevent illegal arrests of officers by soldiers. Many officers were frightened by the violence of the soldiers. Officers, if they had still maintained neutrality, suddenly pledged their allegiance to the Duma Committee.³⁵

Miliukov noted: 'later in the evening a crowd of extremely excited officers made their way into the Tauride Palace and declared that they could not return to their units unless P.N. Miliukov retracted his words.'³⁶ According to Tugan-Baranovskii of the Military Commission, insurgent soldiers burst into the Mil-

33 'Rech' P.N. Miliukova o novom pravitel'stve', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradzkikh zhurnalistov*, No. 6, 2 March 1917, p. 1; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 285.

34 Sukhanov 1923, p. 328.

35 RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 6, ll. 9–12, 16, 18; RGIA, f. 1278 op. 10, d. 5, ll. 22, 23; RGIA, f. 1278, op. 10, d. 9, l. 21.

36 Miliukov 1921, p. 52.

itary Commission and demanded to know whether there would be a monarchy or a republic. Rodzianko demanded that Miliukov declare that his speech concerning the dynasty was only his personal opinion.³⁷ Although his influence was severely undercut by the formation of the provisional government and by the adoption by the Duma Committee of the policy of abdication, Rodzianko jumped on this opportunity to undermine Miliukov's prestige. Miliukov considered his retraction a matter of formality to cool the temper of the masses, but the other members of the Duma Committee and the provisional government thought otherwise, and concluded that for the survival of the provisional government the monarchy should be sacrificed once and for all. While the Duma Committee and the provisional government retreated from their original plan regarding the monarchy in the face of the violent protest of the insurgents, they experienced another serious setback in their attempts to secure legitimacy from the masses through the endorsement of the Soviet Executive Committee. As the liberals had to accommodate themselves to the sentiments of the masses, the leaders of the Soviet Executive Committee, too, had to surrender to their radicalism.

Challenge from the Left and the Right to the Executive Committee's Position

On the basis of the agreement reached between the Duma Committee and the Soviet Executive Committee early on 2 March, Miliukov wrote a proclamation that was to be issued in the name of the Petrograd Soviet. The Petrograd Soviet was to support the provisional government in its efforts to restore order in the capital and to normalise the relationship between soldiers and officers. Two significant developments had taken place, however, before this proclamation was ratified at the general session of the Soviet. The first was the issuance of Order No. 1, and the second was mounting pressure from both the left and the right within the Executive Committee to denounce the agreement that its representatives had reached with the Duma Committee. By urging the soldiers to subordinate themselves ultimately to the authority of the Petrograd Soviet, Order No. 1 destroyed any possibility for the provisional government to establish itself as the sole authority of the revolution. It broadened even further the gap between the provisional government and the insurgent soldiers. The

37 Tugan-Baranovskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 122; Chikolini interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 80. Miliukov 1955, vol. 2, pp. 312–13.

leaders of the Executive Committee had to retreat from the original full-fledged support of the provisional government to a conditional support at the plenary session.

As mentioned earlier, the Executive Committee's decision on 1 March not to participate in the provisional government remained to be approved by the general session on 2 March. Both the right and the left of the Executive Committee therefore organised meetings to plan strategy to overturn the decision. To prevent this, Chkheidze, Sukhanov, Steklov and Sokolov conducted negotiations with the Duma Committee for the transfer of power. They considered it imperative to present the result of the negotiations as an established fact before their critics attacked their policy.

On the morning of 2 March, when Sukhanov went to the room of the Soviet Executive Committee, one of the right-wing members of the Executive Committee burst into the room with a leaflet published jointly by the Mezhraiontsy and the left SRs. The Executive Committee thought that it had managed to confiscate them.³⁸ Although its language was inflammatory, its contents had nothing contradictory with the letter and the spirit of Order No. 1. At the first glance Shliapnikov concluded that the leaflet responded to the concerns expressed by the soldiers at their plenum on 1 March. Nowhere did it 'sanction violence' against the officers, as Sukhanov claimed.³⁹ Yet when Shliapnikov arrived at the Executive Committee, Sukhanov, Steklov and Kerenskii were livid with anger about the leaflet, and demanded its confiscation. Their indignation was understandable. Anxious to keep the fast-developing revolution within reasonable limits, they themselves wished to restore a normal relationship between officers and soldiers, and they had agreed at the meeting with the Duma Committee leaders during the night to soften the effects of Order No. 1. This leaflet was sure to spoil the precarious peace they had achieved with the Duma Committee leaders. But the most dangerous point of this leaflet was its appeal to transform the Soviet into the provisional revolutionary government – a demand that Steklov and Sukhanov had tried to avoid at all costs. Thus, they demanded informal discussion about the leaflet at the Executive Committee, where the majority decided to confiscate all copies.⁴⁰ Neither Iurenev nor Aleksandrovich was present at the meeting. Shliapnikov did not raise strong objections. To counter the confiscated leaflet, the Executive Committee printed a Proclamation in *Izvestiia*:

38 See Chapter 20.

39 Sukhanov 1923, p. 292.

40 Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 231–2. See Melancon, 2009, p. 45.

Comrade soldiers and workers! The Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Soldiers' Deputies has learned that rumours are going around the city and an appeal urging violence against officers is being posted. The Executive Committee has no doubt that the workers and the soldiers not only will not follow such scandalous appeals, but also will oppose their distribution, since they are new attempts to sow trouble and destroy the revolutionary forces.⁴¹

The confiscation of the leaflet was not necessarily an overreaction of the leading group of the Executive Committee. There existed a real possibility of a left-wing alliance of the Bolsheviks, the Mezhraiontsy, the SR Maximalists and the Menshevik initiative group, united over the demand for the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government by the Petrograd Soviet.

The Vyborg District Committee called for the Bolsheviks in the Vyborg District to hold their first legal meeting at the Sampsonievskii Brotherhood on Sampsonievskii Prospekt on 1 March. About two hundred party activists, who came out of the underground for the first time, took part. There were also many non-party workers. At the end the Vyborg Bolsheviks passed the resolution calling for the immediate formation of a provisional revolutionary government from the insurgent workers and soldiers and proclamation of the Petrograd Soviet as the provisional revolutionary government.⁴² Another version of the resolution, which reached Shliapnikov, stated that 'all power must be concentrated in the hands of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies as the single Revolutionary Government until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly', and further that 'the army and the population must execute only the measures of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and consider the measures of the Executive Committee of the members of the State Duma inactive'.⁴³ In both versions of the resolution the idea of the transformation of the Soviet into a provisional revolutionary government was clearly expressed. This idea was consistent with the proposals that the Vyborg District Committee had advanced on 27 February with regard to the formation of the Petrograd Soviet and provided a basis for the potential alliance with the Mezhraiontsy and the left SRs, who had stood for the same principle. Although the Menshevik Initiative Group supported the leading centre of the Executive Committee and

41 'Ofitsery i soldaty', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, No. 4, 3 March 1917, p. 2; Document No. 16, *Petrogradskii sovet* 1991, p. 60.

42 *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie* 1957, p. 6; Dingel'stadt 1925, p. 193.

43 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 236.

opposed the assumption of power by any revolutionary group, they were disturbed by the Executive Committee's close cooperation with the Duma Committee.⁴⁴ Thus, Sukhanov's fear that the left wing might present a demand for the transformation of the Soviet into a provisional revolutionary government was justifiable, and it was possible that if such a cry had been made, the masses might have been swayed to support it.

But the Vyborg District Committee's demand was not accepted either by the Russian Bureau or by the Petersburg Committee, which was reconstructed again on 1 March at the meeting held at the office of L.M. Mikhailov, assistant director of the Labour Exchange in the Petrograd District.⁴⁵ Both the Russian Bureau and the Petersburg Committee, considering the demand for the transformation of the Soviet into a provisional revolutionary government premature, ordered the Vyborg District Committee to stop circulating the leaflet containing the resolution.⁴⁶ Moreover, according to Tarasov-Rodionov, Shliapnikov believed that the gravest danger for the revolution still lay in the possibility of the restoration of tsarism and that from the objective point of view the Duma and the provisional government were helping the workers to destroy tsarist power.⁴⁷

The challenge to the position advocated by the centre of the Executive Committee also came from the right, which advocated formation of a coalition government consisting of the members of the Duma Committee and the Soviet Executive Committee. According to Rafes, the Organisation Committee of the Menshevik party met on the night of 1 and 2 March and decided to push forward the policy of 'coalition' against the decision of the Executive Committee. Prior to the general session of the Soviet on 2 March, the Mensheviks were to have a caucus to plan their strategy.⁴⁸ *Izvestiia* printed an article on 2 March written by a right-wing Menshevik, Bazarov. In this article Bazarov stressed that 'the energy and solidarity of the revolutionary democracy have already compelled the bourgeoisie to make a series of steps beyond the limits that the ruling class would not otherwise have crossed'. Recognising that the Duma Committee had taken revolutionary measures against the old regime, Bazarov went on, 'Lest we should turn this revolutionary path into a counterrevolu-

44 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 219; Zaslavskii/ Kantorovoch 1924, p. 45.

45 Pervyi legal'nyi PK 1927, p. 5; Petersburgskii komitet 2003, pp. 32–3; Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 236.

46 Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 236. The Petersburg Committee's minutes does not mention anything about the formation of a provisional revolutionary government. Pervyi legal'nyi PK 1927, p. 5; Petersburgskii komitet 2003, p. 42.

47 Pervyi legal'nyi PK 1927, pp. 3–4; Tarasov-Rodionov 1931, p. 214.

48 Rafes 1922, p. 195.

tion, democracy must participate in the further reconstruction of the country with unabated energy and must join the composition of the Provisional Government'.⁴⁹ Also the conference of the Petrograd Socialist Revolutionaries held on the morning of 2 March approved Kerenskii's participation in the Provisional Government and condemned the leaflet written by Iurenev and Aleksandrovich.⁵⁰

The slogans of both the right and the left, 'coalition government' and 'Soviet government', which originated from totally different ideological contexts, advocated participation of the Soviet leaders in the new government directly or indirectly. The centre feared that in the confused state of most of the Soviet deputies on ideological matters, these slogans might lead to the demand for the establishment of a Soviet government. The primary aim of the leading group of the Executive Committee was therefore to prevent the demand for a Soviet power from gaining wide support among the rank-and-file Soviet deputies. Thus, pointing out the growing danger from the left, Sukhanov persuaded Ehrlich, the most staunch advocate of a coalition government, not to oppose the transfer of power to the provisional government. Ehrlich promised that he would not intervene in the policy of the Executive Committee.⁵¹ At the same time, Sukhanov instructed Steklov, who was to introduce the Executive Committee's resolution and to explain the results of the negotiations with the Duma Committee at the general session, to make his report as full and lengthy as possible to cut the time for discussion to a minimum.

Steklov Speaks at the Petrograd Session on 2 March

Postol'ku-Poskol'ku: Conditional Support

The general session of the Petrograd Soviet on 2 March began with Steklov's long speech. He explained the conditions for transfer of power adopted by the Executive Committee and how the Duma Committee reacted to each point of these conditions. Having introduced the agreements on many conditions, Steklov explained that the Duma Committee revised the demand for the sol-

49 'Uchastie demokratii v vremennom pravitel'stvom', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, No. 3, 2 March 1917, p. 2.

50 *Delo naroda*, 15 March 1917, quoted in Tokarev 1976, p. 96; Tarasov-Rodionov 1931, p. 215. For the SR's position, see Document 69, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 195–6. The SR's supported the provisional government but emphasised the need of the Petrograd Soviet to 'control' its activities to make sure that it carry out the democratic reforms.

51 Sukhanov 1923, pp. 308, 310.

diers' right for self-government, and opposed the introduction of the republican form of government. He then urged the deputies to ratify these conditions and expounded for the first time the famous formula for the Soviet's conditional support of the provisional government 'in so far as [*postol'ku-poskol'ku*] it carried out democratic reforms'.⁵²

According to this plan, the Petrograd Soviet was not to seek power by itself, but rather to stand behind and watch every activity of the provisional government so that the latter would not go astray from the path that the Petrograd Soviet had mapped out for it. This policy discredited rather than augmented the authority of the Provisional Government; it separated the masses from the government rather than uniting them around it. Miliukov noted that 'the embryo of future difficulties and complications was already reflected in this initial formulation of the mutual relations between the government and the highest organisation of the revolutionary democracy'.⁵³

Kerenskii Stages a Coup

When Steklov's long-winded speech was finally finished, the Executive Committee's plan was disrupted from a completely unexpected direction. Kerenskii stood up, rushed to the platform, and asked for the floor. Despite Chkheidze's hesitation, this move was welcomed by the audience. Pale, trembling, in a mystical half-whisper, Kerenskii began his speech. 'Comrades! Do you trust me?' Enthusiastic exclamations roared in the assembly hall: 'We do, we do!' Kerenskii went on to say:

At the present moment the provisional government has been formed, to which I was appointed to the post of minister of justice. Comrades! I had to give an answer in five minutes and therefore I did not have any possibility of receiving your consent before my decision was made regarding the participation in the provisional government. In my hands the representatives of the old regime were detained and I am determined not to let them out of my hands.⁵⁴

52 Document No. 18, *Petrogradskii sovet* 1991, pp. 61–6; Zaslavskii/ Kantorovich 1924, p. 43.

53 Miliukov 1921, vol. 1, p. 49.

54 'Zaiavlenie A.F. Kerenskogo v Sovete Rabochikh Deputatov', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistsov*, No. 7, 3 March 1917; Document 20, *Petrogradskii sovet* 1991, pp. 77–8; 'Rech' Ministera Iustitsii A.F. Kerenskogo soldatam i grazhdanam, *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, 3 March, p. 3; Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 232–3; Tarasov-Rodionov 1931, pp. 187–8.

That was a long five minutes; actually he had been offered the post by Miliukov on 1 March and it was not until the morning of 2 March that he accepted. He continued: 'Immediately after I became the minister of justice, I ordered the liberation of all political prisoners'. Actually, this order had been given by V. Maklakov, the Duma Committee's commissar to the Ministry of Justice, before Kerenskii's appointment. Kerenskii breathing heavily, came to the crucial point:

Comrades! Since I took upon myself the duties of minister of justice before being formally authorised by you, I resign from the duties of the vice-chairman of the Soviet. But I am ready to accept that title from you again if you acknowledge the necessity of it.

The crowd enthusiastically responded: 'We do, we do!' Without a formal vote and with only this stormy applause as his mandate, Kerenskii obtained the consent of the Soviet deputies for his participation in the provisional government. Once his goal was accomplished, the rest of his speech was an emotional eulogy of the people and the revolution. At one point in his speech, he shouted, leaning forward with a helpless gesture, waving his arms convulsively in the air: 'I cannot live without the people, and if you doubt it, at this moment, kill me!' This rather effusive sentimentalism, typical of Kerenskii's oratorical style, appealed to the temper of the time. As soon as he finished his speech, he left the hall in a hurry without giving his opponents a chance to counteract his action. His colleagues of the Executive Committee, speechless, marvelled at Kerenskii's audacity in manipulating the emotions of the masses with half-truths, but did not dare contradict him for fear that such an action might provoke a dangerous discussion on the problem of power. Thus, Kerenskii completed his coup d'état.

The Soviet Session on the Problem of Power

After Kerenskii's performance, the general session moved to a discussion on the problem of power. As Sukhanov expected, the Bolsheviks attacked the Executive Committee's proposal. Zalutskii [Petrov] spoke first against the formation of the provisional government. He accused the bourgeoisie of making a deal with tsarism. 'Crucial questions were skirted. A revolutionary provisional government has not been formed in the name of the people ... We marched in the streets, spilled blood, but what do we get today? A tsarist counterrevolution against the people'. He bitterly complained that none of the basic questions such as the land question, the eight-hour working day, and the question of peace had been solved. Molotov declared: 'The provisional government is

not revolutionary. Guchkov, factory owners, Rodzianko, and Konovalov would make a mockery out of the people. Instead of land they will throw rocks at the peasants'.⁵⁵ Following the strategy they had previously adopted, Shutko proposed the formation of the provisional revolutionary government 'from the composition of the Soviet'. Shliapnikov supported Shutko's proposal, saying that the introduction of a democratic republic, eight-hour working day, and the democratic election of officers by the soldiers would be included in the programme of such a government.⁵⁶ Iurenev supported the Bolshevik position and opposed the formation of the provisional government.⁵⁷ Ul'ianov declared that he was given the authority by the Kronstadt sailors to propose that a provisional revolutionary government be formed from the Petrograd Soviet.⁵⁸ This was the first time that the Kronstadt sailors voiced their radical view that went even beyond what the Bolsheviks proposed at this session.

Although most of the leaders of the right refrained from attacking the Executive Committee's proposal, some still called for the formation of a coalition government. V.A. Kantorovich, a Menshevik, argued that the success of the revolution would depend on whether it could bring all segments of the population into it. For this purpose, the formation of a coalition government was a necessary prerequisite. Zaslavskii, accusing the opponents of the coalition government of being 'a child with a burn who dreads fire', argued that since other classes of society had already joined the workers and the soldiers, cooperation would be possible also at the governmental level. In fact, the coalition would be the only guaranteed way of saving the revolution from its isolation from the people. Other Menshevik deputies stated that without sending the Soviet's representatives to the provisional government, it would be impossible to control the activities of the provisional government.⁵⁹

The Menshevik Initiative Group did not like the formation of the provisional government, which they considered 'a sad fact', and whose members were 'clearly servants of reaction'. But they did not see any alternative but to accept the conditions presented by the Executive Committee. In A.E. Diubua's words,

55 Document 18, Petrogradskii sovet 1991, p. 67.

56 Tokarev 1976, p. 97. The speeches by Shutko and Shliapnikov were not included in Document 18, Petrogradskii sovet 1991. According to Tokarev, a Bolshevik, I.P. Zhukov, also made a proposal to form a government from the Soviet, similar to Shutko's.

57 Document 18, Petrogradskii sovet 1991, pp. 72–3.

58 Document 18, Petrogradskii sovet 1991, p. 67.

59 Document 18, Petrogradskii sovet, pp. 67–8, 69; Tokarev 1976, p. 98.

If we were to transform the Soviet of Workers' Deputies into a Provisional Revolutionary Government, there will be a dual power and a civil war. Comrades, it is not clear if that part of the people, who will not support [the proletariat], will support the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the workers and the soldiers. They are prepared to act against the tsarist government and to overthrow the tsarist government, but are they willing to go further?⁶⁰

To insure that the provisional government should faithfully carry out the democratic programme, deputy Smirnov proposed the creation of a watchdog committee to monitor the activities of the provisional government. Deputy Anin, who represented the Lithuanian organisation, and Deputy Grigor'ev proposed to include a demand for the national minorities' rights for self-determination and cultural autonomy.⁶¹ It looked like the Executive Committee opened a can of worms, letting the deputies air their uncontrollable demands. It was now time to put a lid on it.

After the discussion the motion of the Executive Committee was presented. The motion proposed accepting the programmes agreed with the provisional government, 'recognising that realisation of these reforms can be achieved by way of constant pressure from the working class'. It further proposed:

The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, recognising the provisional government [as legal power], proposes for the preservation of the interests [of democracy] to create a committee, which will serve the function of observing [the government].⁶²

As a counterproposal, the Bolsheviks offered the following resolution:

In view of the fact that the provisional government is organised by anti-people circles and landlords of Guchkov's type, whom the revolutionary workers and soldiers cannot trust, we protest against every attempt at agreement [with them]. We express no confidence in Kerenskii. Also we recognise that only the provisional revolutionary government can fulfil the popular demands.⁶³

60 Document 18, Petrogradskii sovet, p. 68; Tokarev 1976, p. 98.

61 Document 18, Petrogradskii sovet, pp. 70–1.

62 Tokarev 1976, p. 100.

63 Ibid., pp. 96–7.

The Executive Committee's resolution indicated that to gain the approval of the deputies it had to retreat further from its original full-fledged support of the provisional government to a conditional support. The main tone of the resolution was no longer support of the provisional government, but rather suspicion of the intention and the ability of the provisional government to carry out reforms. On the other hand, the Bolsheviks' resolution mentioned nothing about the position of the Soviet in relation to the proposed provisional revolutionary government. Zaslavskii and Kantorovich also noted that the Bolsheviks did not advocate the seizure of power by the Soviet, thereby failing to provide an alternative to the Executive Committee's policy. The result of the vote was overwhelming victory for the Executive Committee. Of approximately four hundred deputies present at the general session, of whom there were at least forty Bolsheviks, only fourteen voted for the Bolshevik resolution.⁶⁴

After the Soviet session Sukhanov, Steklov and Chkheidze met again with Miliukov to reach a final agreement on the content of the proclamation of the provisional government that was to be printed in the newspapers the next day. Miliukov again demanded the elimination of the demand for the immediate introduction of a democratic republic. Sukhanov agreed to withdraw this demand.⁶⁵

With the concession of the Executive Committee on the question of the future form of government, full agreement was reached between the new government and the Soviet Executive Committee. Miliukov had already written the draft of the proclamation of the government on the previous night. It declared that the provisional government would not try to find an excuse in wartime conditions for delaying the internal reforms it had agreed to carry out through the negotiations with the Soviet, and listed the contents of the reforms. Miliukov suggested to Sukhanov that it might be better to have the co-signature of the Duma Committee, to underscore that the provisional government was created as two parent bodies, the Duma Committee and the Petrograd Soviet. Sukhanov did not consider it necessary, since the Duma Committee had played no role in producing this document, and Miliukov did not pursue this further.⁶⁶ After the final agreement, Miliukov collected the signatures from the members of the provisional government. As the general session of the Soviet

64 Document 18, Petrogradskii sovet 1991, p. 74; Zaslavskii/ Kantorovich 1924, p. 45; Tokarev 1976, p. 98; Shliapnikov 1923c, pp. 240–1. According to Document 18 and Zaslavskii and Kantorovich, the resolution obtained fifteen votes; according to Shliapnikov, nineteen votes, according to Tokarev fourteen.

65 Sukhanov 1923, p. 340.

66 Gaida 2003, p. 308.

stipulated, however, the proclamation also obtained Rodzianko's signature. On 3 March, the Soviet newspaper *Izvestiia* and the *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov* printed the provisional government's proclamation.⁶⁷

At the final moment, however, there was one small matter that overturned the whole project. When the proclamation was printed in Petrograd Soviet's *Izvestiia*, however, the reader also saw in the adjacent column the following announcement, penned by Steklov:

Comrades and citizens!

The new government, which was created from socially moderate elements of society, today has announced all the reforms it pledges to carry out, partly in the process of the struggle with the old regime, partly upon the conclusion of this struggle. These reforms include some which should be welcomed by wide democratic circles ... And we believe that, *in so far as the emerging government acts in the direction of realising these obligations and of struggling resolutely against the old regime*, the democracy must lend its support [Italics TH].⁶⁸

That was the formulation of the conditional support of the provisional government. It nullified the results obtained by the provisional government, which had expected the Soviet Executive Committee to persuade the insurgents to pledge their support to the provisional government. Despite Miliukov's bold pronouncement that the provisional government was a product of the revolution, in the eyes of the insurgents it remained illegitimate.

Miliukov was so close to victory, but Steklov's editorial spoiled that victory.

67 'Ot vremennogo pravitel'stva', 'Ot Iсполnitel'nogo komiteta Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, No. 4, 3 March 1917; 'Ot Vremennogo Pravitel'stva: Grazhdane!', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, No. 7, 3 March 1927, p. 1. See Startsev 2005b, p. 211; Miliukov 1978, pp. 33–4.

68 'Ot Iсполnitel'nogo komiteta Sovet soldatskikh i rabochikh deputatov', *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, No. 4, 3 March 1917, p. 1.

Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich's Renunciation of the Throne

New Political Realignment of the Monarchy

The abdication of Nicholas II in favour of Aleksei under Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich's regency was the original intent of the Duma Committee and the provisional government. Two significant events took place after the departure of Guchkov and Shul'gin to Pskov, however, that wrecked the original plan. The first was the angry reaction of the masses to Miliukov's revelation that the monarchy was being preserved. Succumbing to their opposition, the members of the provisional government and the Duma Committee, with the sole exception of Miliukov, came to the conclusion that nothing but an end to the monarchy would be able to calm the anger of the insurgents.

The second incident was the unexpected abdication by Nicholas II for Aleksei as well as for himself in favour of Mikhail. This news was first brought by Guchkov and Shul'gin early on the morning of 3 March. Before they left Pskov, they sent a coded telegram about this news, and sent Nicholas's manifesto of abdication to the General Staff (the telegram was addressed to Rodzianko at the Hughes Apparatus at the General Staff).¹

Before 3 a.m. on 3 March, Rodzianko and L'vov left the Tauride Palace for the General Staff to retrieve a copy of the manifesto, and then went to the War Ministry to contact Ruzskii and Alekseev at the Hughes apparatus, leaving the rest of the Duma Committee and the provisional government members in the dark as to the content of the telegram.² But before Rodzianko returned to the Tauride Palace, the Duma Committee and the provisional government

1 Guchkov and Shul'gin to chief of staff, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, pp. 15–16; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 142; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 286–7.

2 Rodzianko and L'vov left the Tauride Palace no later than 3 a.m. and the Rodzianko-Alekseev conversation did not begin until 6:45. Rodzianko's conversation with Ruzskii did not end until 8:45. It is not clear exactly when, but Lyandres notes that Rodzianko and L'vov took a catnap in a separate residence of their acquaintances where they could not be reached by telephone. By the time they returned to the Tauride Palace after 8:45, the meeting of the provisional government members and Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich had been already

members learned that that Nicholas's abdication had taken place, and before 4:30 they received the text of the abdication manifesto.³

At 4:30 a.m. Lieutenant-Colonel Moroz of the General Staff sent to the Tauride Palace a copy of the telegram sent from the Stavka to Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, commander of the Caucasus Front, in which the draft manifesto of Nicholas's abdication was included. As discussed in the previous chapter, the draft manifesto rejected the original intention of the Duma Committee to seek Nicholas's abdication for his son under the regency of Mikhail, and granted the throne to Mikhail by double abdications for himself and for his son. This was a violation of the succession law. Should the grand duke accept the illegitimate throne? Should the Duma Committee and the provisional government persuade the grand duke to assume the throne, thereby claiming the legitimacy of the provisional government with the anointment of the illegally installed new emperor? Or should they persuade the grand duke to renounce the throne? This would mean the end of the monarchy, a fundamental restructuring of the state system.

Closely connected, but little noticed at that time, was the position and the status of the State Duma. Nicholas abdicated 'in agreement with the State Duma', and 'enjoined' the grand duke to fulfil his duty in agreement with the Duma. Although the succession was illegal, what was assumed was the transition of power within the existing state structure, only under a parliamentary system, where the government (the Council of Ministers), appointed by the new emperor in cooperation with the Duma, would function as the executive power in accordance with the laws approved by the legislature. What would be the implication of Mikhail's refusal to assume the throne – and therefore of the end of the monarchy – in terms of the status of the Duma? Would the Duma also perish with the monarchy or would the prestige of the Duma be elevated as the only institution that could provide legitimacy to the provisional government? These were heavy issues that confronted the members of the Duma Committee and the provisional government.

set. Lyandres takes the position that it was Kerenskii who made the appointment to meet the grand duke at 6 a.m. Lyandres 2013, pp. 153–4.

3 According to Nekrasov, they received a copy from Bublikov after Rodzianko and L'vov had left the Tauride Palace. According to Savich, they received a copy from Kapnist of the Naval General Staff at 1, but the text could not have arrived before 3. Savich 1993, p. 219. According to Ioffe, the telegram that was sent to Warsaw Station intended for Bubikov (and therefore for Rodzianko) was seized by two officers accompanied by soldiers sent by Kerenskii. Ioffe 1987, p. 79.

Even before Rodzianko and L'vov returned to the Tauride Palace, a stormy debate had begun among the members of the Duma Committee and the provisional government.⁴ These new developments from 2 March through the morning of 3 March again triggered new political realignments. Those who had sought and won Nicholas's abdication, rather than accepting Rodzianko's limited constitutional reform, represented an alliance between two diverse points of view. The first was represented by Miliukov, who considered it crucial to obtain the legitimacy of the provisional government from the monarchy, without relying on the State Duma. The provisional government would have a free hand as the sole executive, legislative and judicial authority, unencumbered by the State Duma, until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. But for that, it would be absolutely necessary for the provisional government to be anointed by the new tsar, who was to transfer power to it and to serve as a mere figurehead after his initial sanction. If the throne had been passed to Aleksei with Mikhail's regency, and Mikhail had granted the executive power as the Council of Ministers to the provisional government, the continuity with the old state structure would have been preserved with no legal complications. The problem was that the grand duke had no right to succeed Nicholas, and hence no right to bestow that power to the provisional government.

Kerenskii, supported by Nekrasov, Tereshchenko and Konovalov, headed the second group. Prince L'vov joined this group. Nekrasov, Tereshchenko and Konovalov had been involved in Guchkov's conspiracy for a palace coup, and Nekrasov was one of the Duma Committee's delegates on 27 February to persuade Grand Duke Mikhail to assume the regency under a military dictatorship. They welcomed the revolution and sought legitimacy for the provisional government in the revolution itself, but in the political context of 1 March, they were compelled to accept retention of the monarchical system in the form of Nicholas's abdication and Mikhail's regency. But with the new development, they were now prepared to end the monarchical system once and for all by calling for Mikhail to renounce the throne. It is difficult to ascertain if there was any Masonic role in this issue, but it appears that Kerenskii, with his known republicanism, emerged as the major spokesman of this group. According to Kerenskii, he did not give the question of Mikhail's regency much thought until 3 March. But Nicholas' double abdications gave Kerenskii a golden opportunity. If he could persuade Mikhail to renounce the throne, the provisional

4 Rodzianko and L'vov returned to the Tauride Palace after 8:45, more likely after 9 a.m. The discussion on the abdication continued for half an hour after Rodzianko's return. 'Protokol sobytiia', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 143; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 278.

government would be more reliant on the Petrograd Soviet, and Kerenskii's importance would be enhanced more as the pivotal link between the provisional government and the Petrograd Soviet.⁵

They acquired a powerful ally, Rodzianko, for their efforts to end the monarchy. Wednesday, 1 March, had been a humiliating day for Rodzianko: his reputation had been tarnished after his order provoked the insurgent soldiers' anger, and his name had been dropped from the list of potential heads for the provisional government. But Rodzianko had not relinquished his political ambition, still hoping to restore his influence. He firmly believed that the State Duma should be the guarantee of legitimacy for the provisional government, and for that reason he had sanctioned the formation of the provisional government in the name of the Duma Committee, thereby attempting to maintain that the State Duma, from which the Duma Committee was created, was the foundation on which the provisional government had to be based. The provisional government should be the executive power, responsible to the State Duma that should serve as the legislative power.⁶ When the insurgents protested against the retention of the monarchical system, Rodzianko was frightened by the extent of the popular resentment towards the monarchy. He would have preferred to preserve the monarchy, but his experience in dealing with Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich led to utter disappointment. He came to doubt the efficacy of the monarchical system headed by such a weak-willed emperor. Early in the morning of 3 March, when he first received the news of Nicholas's decision to offer the throne to his brother, his first reaction was that Mikhail should be crowned. But by the time he left the Tauride Palace for the War Ministry to receive the abdication manifesto, he had already changed his mind. It seemed to the chairman of the Duma 'that it was quite obvious to us that the grand duke would not have reigned more than a few hours and that terrible bloodshed, marking the beginning of a general civil war, would have immediately started within the walls of the capital'.⁷

At the same time, he saw in the new development an opportunity to undermine the prestige of his rival, Miliukov. If the monarchy were eliminated, the provisional government would not have any foundation on which to base its legitimacy, except on the State Duma. Thus, Rodzianko made a 180-degree turn-

5 Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 234; Kulikov 2014b, pp. 403–4.

6 Rodzianko to Alekseev, no. 158, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 9. For the consistency of Rodzianko's policy, challenging my own view on Rodzianko changing his position, see Lyandres 2013, pp. 285–9. See also Ioffe 1987, pp. 79–80.

7 Rodzianko 1922, p. 62.

around and supported Kerenskii and Nekrasov.⁸ From Kerenskii's and Nekrasov's point of view, Rodzianko's participation in their ranks was welcome, since they had to pursue their goals in such a way that the segments of society that might support the monarchy, particularly the military leaders, should be convinced of the necessity of abolishing the monarchical system. Rodzianko was a suitable candidate for the negotiator with the military. Nobody else – Kerenskii, Nekrasov, and even Prince L'vov – fit the bill.

Ironically, it was Miliukov, Nicholas's personal enemy, who fought a lone fight to preserve the monarchy. Miliukov realised that for the consolidation of the new order, a strong power would be needed, and that a strong power was, under the circumstances, guaranteed only when it was based on a symbol that could attract the support of the masses. The monarchy was such a symbol. 'The Provisional Government alone without the fulcrum of this symbol', Miliukov predicted, 'could not survive until a constituent assembly. It will turn out to be a fragile boat that will sink in the ocean of mass disturbances'.⁹ While other members of the Duma Committee and the provisional government succumbed to the radicalism of the Petrograd masses, Miliukov could see beyond the insurgents of Petrograd and comprehend the cold reality of the problem of power. Miliukov understood that support for the provisional government would not come from the revolutionised Petrograd masses, but from the vast majority of the Russian people who had remained neutral to the revolution in Petrograd. Miliukov suggested that the provisional government should abandon Petrograd and establish its headquarters in Moscow, where he assumed the situation was calmer. Despite the efforts of his colleagues to change his mind, Miliukov stood firm and stubbornly refused to give in, and threatened to resign from the provisional government if Mikhail refused to assume the throne. The rest of the provisional government and Duma Committee members managed to talk him out of resignation by promising that he would be able to present his views fully to Mikhail when they met him later.¹⁰ The discussion was deadlocked, and they decided to leave the decision to the grand duke himself.

Miliukov was not the only one to advocate the retention of the monarchical system. He thought that he could count on Guchkov and Shul'gin, who were on their way back from Pskov to Petrograd. Moreover, the Duma Committee

8 Rodzianko confided to Steklov on 3 March that two days before he would have considered the idea of ending the monarchy 'crazy' and that there was no way he could have supported such an idea. Gaida 2003, p. 308, citing GARF f. 6977, op. 1, d. 2, l. 48.

9 Miliukov 1955, p. 316; Miliukov 1978, p. 38.

10 Miliukov 1921, p. 23; Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 149–50.

record indicates that some officers' groups were disturbed by the provisional government's clearly 'republican' stand, and protested that the provisional government should not take any position on the form of government until the Constituent Assembly.¹¹

After the joint meeting of the Duma Committee and the provisional government Kerenskii telephoned Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich at 5:55 on the morning of 3 March and requested that he be good enough to receive the representatives of the Duma Committee and the provisional government.¹²

Rodzianko Asks Alekseev to Stop Circulating Nicholas's Manifesto of Abdication

Before we move to the decisive meeting at Millionnaia Street, we must return to Rodzianko's conversation with Alekseev over the Hughes Apparatus, which began at 6:45 a.m. As soon as Rodzianko and L'vov received the telegram from Guchkov and Shul'gin, they went to the Hughes Apparatus in the War Ministry and called Alekseev at the Stavka. Rodzianko was at the apparatus, and behind him stood L'vov. It is not clear why L'vov was there and did not say a word. Perhaps he was serving as Rodzianko's overseer, lest the Chairman of the Duma should make a secret deal with the military. And yet Rodzianko, not L'vov, had to be the front man to talk to the military, since L'vov would invite suspicions among the military leaders.

Rodzianko demanded that in view of the new development in the capital Alekseev should not circulate the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication until further instructions from Rodzianko. Irritated with Rodzianko's commanding tone, Alekseev answered that the Stavka had already sent the manifesto to the commanders-in-chief of all fronts and that it was not only undesirable but also impossible to halt its circulation. He promised to send a supplementary explanation, but expressed fear that despite his efforts the contents of the manifesto would become known sooner or later. 'Obviously, A.I. Guchkov telegraphed to you the essence [of the manifesto] from Pskov', the chief of staff

11 'Protokol sobyti', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 139–40. This led the Duma Committee's reconsideration to seek Nicholas's abdication. But the 'Potokol zasedanii' omits the passage describing the Duma Committee's reconsideration of the previous decision. It is highly unlikely that such a change in policy took place. 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 273, fn. 273, p. 337.

12 Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 235; 'Protokol sobytii'. *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 143; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 278.

added, 'I would have preferred to have been informed by you earlier as to what should have been detained'.

What the Chairman of the Duma said next was a total shock to Alekseev. Rodzianko replied that what had been agreed upon before Guchkov and Shulg'in's departure was the accession to the throne by Aleksei under Mikhail's regency. But this solution was not adopted, and therefore the question of whether or not the monarchical system should be preserved had to wait for the decision of the Constituent Assembly. During the interim 'the Supreme Committee and the Council of Ministers' were to assume power. The use, or rather the misuse, of the terms 'Supreme Committee' for the 'Provisional Committee of the State Duma [Duma Committee]', and 'Council of Ministers' for the 'provisional government', was not accidental. The 'Supreme Committee' sounded like an organ that could have been entrusted by the Duma to function as supreme power, and the 'Council of Ministers' suggested continuity with the old regime. It is important to note that Rodzianko presented the Duma Committee and the provisional government as equal in power, although he did not clearly say what relationship these two organisations should establish. Later Rodzianko clarified this point as follows: 'the Supreme Council, a responsible ministry, the legislative chambers to be active until the question of the constitution is solved by the Constituent Assembly'. Alekseev was puzzled and asked who headed the 'Supreme Council'. Only then did Rodzianko correct his two misstatements, and said that what he meant by the 'Supreme Council' was the Duma Committee under his chairmanship. It is possible to see here clearly Rodzianko's intention to elevate the Duma Committee, headed by himself, in competition with the provisional government.¹³ L'vov did not say a word on this during the conversation, and history does not record what reactions he had.

Rodzianko went on to assert that 'the promulgation of the manifesto should be prevented, because the proposed combination [of the abdication of Nicholas and Aleksei in favour of Mikhail] may lead to civil war, and because the candidacy of Mikhail Aleksandrovich for emperor is acceptable to no one'.¹⁴ There was a huge difference between the abolition of the monarchy until the Constituent Assembly restored it and the preservation of the monarchy until the Constituent Assembly abolished it. What Rodzianko suggested was the former. The implication of his suggestion was so stunning and so sudden and

13 Rodzianko–Alekseev conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 26; Browder/Kerensky 1961, pp. 111–12.

14 Rodzianko–Alekseev conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 26; Browder/Kerensky 1961, pp. 111–12.

so unexpected that Alekseev did not seem to grasp the magnitude of this proposal immediately. Nonetheless, his immediate reply was no less threatening. 'The uncertainty [of the dynastic question] and the Constituent Assembly are two dangerous toys for the active army'. He further declared that the Petrograd Garrison had become 'harmful for the fatherland, useless for the army, and dangerous for all'. Although Alekseev assured Rodzianko that as a soldier all his thoughts were concentrated on the struggle with the external enemy, the threat of a military intervention was clearly implied.¹⁵

Rodzianko Asks Ruzskii to Support His Position

If Alekseev entertained the possibility of military intervention, however, Rodzianko had to nip it in the bud. For this purpose, the Duma chairman went over the head of the chief of staff, and contacted the military leader who was most likely to agree with him.¹⁶ Two hours later, after he finished the conversation with Alekseev, Rodzianko talked to Ruzskii through the direct wire. Prince L'vov also stood by Rodzianko at the end of the Hughes Apparatus, but it was only Rodzianko who spoke.

The Chairman of the Duma began with the request to withhold the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication, since 'we succeeded in confining the revolutionary movement within more or less reasonable limits, but the situation has not returned to normal and a civil war is still possible'.¹⁷ Ruzskii promised that he would do his best, but complained that Guchkov and Shul'gin had not explained with sufficient clarity about the real conditions in the capital. Rodzianko then explained the situation in Petrograd as follows: Another soldiers' uprising had broken out with such destructive force as he had never seen before. They were no longer soldiers, but *muzhiks* – simple, ignorant peasants – who had found a good opportunity to declare *muzhiks'* demands. The crowds were shouting only: 'Land and liberty!' 'Down with the dynasty!' 'Down with the Romanovs!' 'Down with the officers!' Officers were massacred in many army units, and anarchy had reached its climax.

15 Rodzianko–Alekseev conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 26; Browder/Kerensky 1961, pp. 112.

16 The Duma Committee record indicates that Rodzianko sent a telegram to the Stavka and all the commanders not to publish the manifesto. See 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 143; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 278.

17 Ruzskii–Rodzianko conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*, 1927b, pp. 27–8. Browder/Kerensky 1961, pp. 109–10; Steinberg/Khrustalev 1995, pp. 103–5.

To prevent the further development of anarchy, 'we had to come to an agreement with the deputies of the workers', and promise the convocation of a constituent assembly to enable the people to express their opinion about the form of government. 'Only then did Petrograd take a long breath and the night passed relatively peacefully'. The proclamation of Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich as emperor, however, would pour oil onto the fire and touch off the merciless destruction of everything that can be destroyed. 'Power is slipping out of our hands and no one could possibly allay the popular unrest'. Rodzianko assured Ruzskii that the possibility of the return to the monarchy was not completely lost, since the people would be able to voice their opinion in its favour in the Constituent Assembly. But in the meantime, until the end of the war, the 'Supreme Soviet' and the provisional government should continue to rule. When Ruzskii asked what Rodzianko meant by the 'Supreme Soviet' and who headed it, the Duma chairman immediately corrected the mistake and said that he meant the State Duma under his chairmanship. This was again an intentional slip of tongue.¹⁸

It is true that popular resentment of Miliukov's speech was expressed in a number of incidents of illegal searches, arrests and reprisals that were carried out on officers by soldiers. Colonel Tugan-Baranovskii, who offered his service for the Military Commission, was in charge of the liaison between the Duma Committee and the insurgent soldiers. He testified to the radical mood of the insurgents on 2 March. He described how placards with the inscription 'Down with the Romanovs' suddenly appeared in the Tauride Palace. According to the colonel, 'A crisis was brewing; slaughter was becoming a real possibility'. Anti-Romanov sentiments were so dangerous that Tugan-Baranovskii, together with other officers, suggested to Savich, Miliukov and Shingarev that the idea of continuing the monarchical system be abandoned.¹⁹ Although Rodzianko's warning about another imminent soldiers' uprising was an exaggeration, there existed the danger of further radicalisation of insurgents, fanned by the news of the preservation of the monarchy.

As for his request to not circulate the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication, Rodzianko explained, he did not want the public to know about Mikhail's accession to power. What was at stake was no longer Nicholas's abdication, but the elimination of the monarchy. The high command was puzzled by the radicalisation of the Duma chairman. Later on the same day, Alekseev came

18 Ruzskii-Rodzianko conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia*, 1927b, p. 28; Browder/Kerensky 1961, p. 110; Steinberg/Khrustalev 1995, p. 105.

19 Tugan-Baranopvskii interview, *Lyandres* 2013, p. 122.

to the conclusion that it could be explained only by the assumption that Rodzianko was being controlled by the left-wing parties.²⁰

Alekseev Could Not Put Humpty Dumpty Back Together Again

In the meantime, Alekseev instructed the Stavka's Naval Staff to contact the Naval Staff in Petrograd through another Hughes Apparatus to verify the veracity of Rodzianko's information. The Naval Staff in Petrograd brought astonishing information that vastly contradicted Rodzianko's depiction of the situation in the capital. According to the Chief of Naval Administration, V.M. Al'tfater, in Petrograd, 'the situation is rather quiet, and everything is gradually returning to normal'. Goncharov at the Stavka asked about the rumour that a slaughter of officers had taken place on the previous day. Al'tfater answered: 'It is all sheer nonsense'. The Chief of Naval Administration further ascertained that the authority of the Duma Committee was increasing rather than diminishing.²¹ This information was immediately brought to Alekseev's attention.

Alekseev had suspected before that Rodzianko had not been altogether candid, but because of the lack of contradictory information, he had accepted his recommendation on Nicholas's abdication and decided to withdraw General Ivanov's troops. Also it was on Rodzianko's recommendation that Alekseev had agreed to appoint General Kornilov against Brusilov's opposition to replace General Ivanov, thereby making it impossible to reverse the decision to discontinue military intervention. Although he was sceptical about Rodzianko's further demand to withhold the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication, he nonetheless complied by ordering all commanders not to make it public.²² But the information brought by the Naval Staff for the first time made him realise that clearly Rodzianko had been manipulating the information all along and that Alekseev and the military had been duped.

Angered by Rodzianko's duplicity and tormented by the thought that he might have irretrievably led the military and the country astray, he took immediate action. At 1:30 a.m. on 3 March he dispatched telegrams to the commanders-in-chief of all fronts. In this telegram Alekseev began by outlining the conversation he had had with Rodzianko and the conversation between Rodzianko and Ruzskii, the copy of which he had just received. After introducing

20 Alekseev to Ruzskii, Evert, Brusilov, Sakharov, no. 1918, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 23.

21 Ibid., *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 32.

22 Alekseev to commanders, no. 1913, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 19.

Rodzianko's demand to delay circulation of the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication to the army units, Alekseev pointed out that the manifesto had already been widely distributed and insisted that such an important document, intended for the public, should not be kept secret. Indeed, the alleged 'concealment' of the abdication manifesto – an action Admiral Nepenin did not desire – had led to the sailors' uprising against the officers in the Baltic Fleet.²³

Alekseev then expressed his opinion about Rodzianko's information. First, he learned that there was no unity within the Duma or within the Duma Committee itself and that the Petrograd Soviet was acquiring strong influence. Second, 'the left-wing parties and the workers' deputies are exerting tremendous pressure on Rodzianko' and that 'Rodzianko has provided information without frankness or sincerity'. Third, the political solution proposed by Rodzianko emanated from the aims of the left-wing parties, who had taken Rodzianko as their prisoner. Fourth, the troops of the Petrograd Garrison had finally fallen completely under the influence of the propaganda of the workers' deputies and had become 'harmful and dangerous to all, including the moderate elements of the Provisional Committee'. Here Alekseev was referring to the two separate bodies, the Duma Committee and the provisional government, believing that they were one single unit – proof of how far removed he was from the reality in Petrograd. It is important to note also that Alekseev considered Rodzianko's deception motivated solely by left-wing influence, without understanding that it stemmed from the Duma Chairman's own political calculations. Further, characterising Rodzianko's information as deceptive, Alekseev concluded that 'the outlined situation constituted a danger more serious than any other for the active army', since he expected that 'uncertainty, vacillation, and change of the manifesto' would have staggering effects and deprive the army of 'the fighting capacity', which in turn would result in 'the hopeless misery of Russia, territorial loss, and the takeover by the extreme left elements'.²⁴ He then made the following recommendation:

Since I received the order from His Majesty the Emperor to consult with Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich at serious moments by urgent telegrams, I report all this to him, and ask for his instructions, adding: first, it is urgent to communicate to the chairman of the Duma the essence of my present conclusions and demand the implementation of the manifesto in the

23 Alekseev to commanders, no. 1913, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927b*, pp. 22–3; for the insurrection of the sailors in the Baltic Fleet at Helsingfors, see David Longley 1978, pp. 1–22. The revolt of the Baltic Fleet is beyond the scope of this book.

24 Alekseev to Ruzskii, Evert, Brusilov, Sakharov, no. 1918 *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927b*, p. 23.

name of the salvation of the homeland and of the active army; second, to restore unity in all cases and all circumstances [it is necessary] to convene a meeting of the commanders at Mogilev. If the supreme commander [now Nikolai Nikolaevich] is willing to attend this meeting, the date will be determined by his Majesty; if the grand duke considers it impossible to attend personally, then it will be held on 8 or 9 March.²⁵

This telegram made it clear that Alekseev wished the military to stand behind his decision to present an ultimatum to Rodzianko that the military would not tolerate any concessions beyond Nicholas's abdication. The proposal for a conference of front commanders clearly indicated his intention to revive the plan of military intervention against Petrograd. Finally to confirm his analysis, Alekseev repeated the information he had obtained from the Naval Staff, and stated: 'Consequently, the basic motives of Rodzianko cannot be trusted and must be directed to compel the representatives of the active army to accept the decision of the extreme elements as an established and inevitable fact'. Although in his recommendation to Nicholas to abdicate, Alekseev insisted upon the necessity of the army's staying out of internal politics, he now advocated that the military should actively intervene in the course of events. He urged the front commanders to consult the army commanders under them and to let them know of both the situation and the proposed conference.²⁶

The big question was now whether Alekseev and all the king's men could put Humpty Dumpty back together again. The front commanders, however, with the exception of Sakharov, reacted to Alekseev's proposal coldly. Brusilov considered it unwise for the front commanders to abandon their posts under the present circumstances. He did not mention anything specific about Rodzianko's attitude toward the monarchical system, but merely commented that 'the problem is extremely difficult to solve, though obviously extremely necessary to discuss'.²⁷ While Brusilov avoided the issue on grounds of technicality, Ruzskii completely opposed Alekseev's proposal to convene a military conference for military action against the provisional government. The commander of the northern front also considered it necessary to make the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication public, but disagreed with Alekseev on all other points. In Ruzskii's opinion, the military should come to terms with the provisional government. Since the military was the only authoritative power in places other

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 23–4.

²⁷ Brusilov to Alekseev, no. 782, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 24.

than Petrograd, the front commanders should remain at their posts. As for notifying subordinates of the situation, Ruzskii did not see any merit in consulting them.²⁸ Thus, the distinct possibility of the end of the monarchy and Rodzi-anko's duplicity, which Ruzskii might have been aware of long before Alekseev, did not deter Ruzskii from the conclusion he had drawn when he learned of the formation of the Duma Committee – the necessity of cooperating with the Duma Committee and the provisional government.

Sakharov was the only commander who agreed with Alekseev's proposal to convene a military conference, but even Sakharov did not express his opinion about the wisdom of military intervention and the danger of making further concessions to the liberals.²⁹ Evert considered it necessary for the military to act decisively and immediately. In his opinion, both the absence of the official announcement and the convocation of a constituent assembly would be dangerous. The only alternative would be to change the form of government by imperial decree and to have this change accepted by the Duma and the provisional government. In any case the proposed conference on 8 or 9 March would be too late.³⁰

But the most decisive blow to Alekseev's proposal came from Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich. The grand duke answered Alekseev that the convocation of a constituent assembly would be unacceptable and that the transfer of power to Mikhail Aleksandrovich rather than the tsarevich would lead to bloodshed. But he further stated that he could not attend the meeting suggested by Alekseev since he would need several days for orientation as the new supreme commander under the new government.³¹ From the grand duke's point of view, to accept Alekseev's invitation for a military conference and military intervention against the provisional government would mean to risk the new post. Since in Alekseev's plans for military action against the provisional government Nikolai Nikolaevich was to play a pivotal role, the grand duke's refusal to attend the military conference virtually torpedoed Alekseev's plan. It would be difficult to try to save the Romanovs when the most important member of the Romanovs opposed the attempt.

Finally Brusilov's direct conversation with Alekseev dealt the coup de grace to Alekseev's attempt at military intervention. Brusilov argued that at a time when there was an omnipresent danger from the left, it was necessary for the military to support the provisional government and not interfere in politics

28 Ruzskii to Alekseev, no. 1254/B, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 24.

29 Sakharov to Alekseev, no. 03411, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 25.

30 Evert to Alekseev, no. 6245, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, pp. 43–4.

31 Nikolai Nikolaevich to Alekseev, no. 3318, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 24.

while the latter was trying its best to alleviate its danger.³² In the meantime, Alekseev received bad news that the sailors' uprising had spread to the entire Baltic Fleet. Nepenin declared that the Baltic Fleet as a fighting unit 'does not exist'.³³ Thus, Alekseev's plans for military suppression were finally frustrated by other military leaders. Humpty Dumpty – the monarchy – had already fallen. And no king's horses and no king's men could put Humpty Dumpty back together again.

Lawyer N.N. Ivanov and *La Nuit De Millionnaia*

After he left the Winter Palace, Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich was staying at Princess O.P. Putiatina's apartment on Millionnaia Street No. 12, not far from the Winter Palace, and just across the street from the Hermitage and the palace of Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich.

Lawyer N.N. Ivanov left two curious documents describing his midnight conversations with the grand duke. These are fascinating documents, but their reliability is questionable.³⁴ According to his account, after the grand dukes' manifesto was 'confiscated' by Miliukov, Ivanov went back to visit Mikhail, and persuaded him to send a personal letter urging the emperor to come to an agreement with the Duma Committee. Ivanov brought this letter to Rodzi-anko, but the situation developed so quickly that Mikhail's 'heart-to-heart' letter to his brother was deemed too late and useless.³⁵ Late at night on 2 March, N.N. Ivanov received a telephone call from Rodzianko's secretary, who requested that he come to the chairman's office immediately. Rozianko informed Ivanov about the new development of Nicholas's abdication and asked Ivanov

32 Alekseev-Brusilov conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 25.

33 Nepenin to Rusin, no. 285/op, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 35; Nepenin to Rusin, no. 286/op, *ibid.*, p. 36. Also see Longley 1978, pp. 1–22; Saul 1978, pp. 59–80.

34 The Bakhmeteff Archive at Columbia University has two handwritten documents written by N.N. Ivanov: 'Velikii Kniaz' Mikhail Aleksandrovich v nachale marta 1917g.' and 'Otrechenie Vel. K. Mikhaila Aleksandrovicha.' Ganelin has introduced two documents, 'Okolo "tsaria" Mikhaila', which is deposited in GARF, f. 5811, op. 2, d. 369 (Ganelin 2014f, pp. 417–20), and 'Tragicheskii dni 1917 goda: otrechenie vel. kn. Mikhaila Aleksandrovicha, Okonchanie', which was printed *Russkaia mysl'* No. 871, 1 March 1956 (Ganelin 2014f, pp. 420–5). The first handwritten document at Bakhmeteff Archive seems to be identical with the document Ganelin uncovered from GARF, and the second text is identical with the published account in *Russkaia mysl'*.

35 Ivanov, *Velikii Kniaz*, Bakhmeteff, pp. 1–3; Ganelin 2014f, pp. 417–19.

to go to see the grand duke, and 'attempt to convince him of the necessity of assuming the throne'.³⁶ If we believe that N.N. Ivanov's accounts are authentic, several important facts emerge. First, Rodzianko had received the news of Nicholas's double abdications in favour of his brother already late on the night of 2 March or early on the morning on 3 March. Since Nicholas signed the abdication manifesto at 11:42 p.m. on 1 March, Rodzianko must have received the news immediately after. How this information reached Rodzianko so quickly and who brought this information to Rodzianko remains unknown. Second, according to N.N. Ivanov, Rodzianko was in favour of Mikhail's assuming the throne when he invited Ivanov to his office. If so, the question arises when exactly and why Rodzianko switched his position and came to advocate for Mikhail's refusal to assume the throne. Third, the news of Nicholas's double abdications and his decision to offer the throne to his brother had been known to Mikhail already early on the morning of 3 March. Again how this information reached the grand duke has not been determined.

There are, however, reasons why we should treat Ivanov's account with scepticism. For instance, according to Ivanov, on the previous day, Mikhail had asked Ivanov to make an arrangement to bring his wife to him, and he managed to whisk Countess Brasova to Putiatina's apartment.³⁷ This is the only account that says that Countess Brasova was with her husband in Countess Putiatina's apartment, an account that is not verified by other sources. When Ivanov went to the apartment, he found the grand duke shaken and in a state of complete despair. Unable to sit down, Mikhail walked from one room to another hurriedly, repeating: 'I have never thought of such a thing. I am not capable of ruling over the people'. He had long conversation with Ivanov about constitutional monarchy, republicanism, and people's attitude to the Romanovs. At one point, Countess Brasova entered the room in a nightgown and said to Ivanov: 'How could the grand duke with his health conditions think about such a horrible thing as administering the state? ... Leave us alone to our quiet life. What is needed now is the health of Alexander III and his will, and we do not have either'.³⁸

Finally, the grand duke decided that he would wait for the arrival of the Duma Committee's delegations. He would listen to their opinion and then make the final decision. As Ivanov bid farewell to the grand duke, he told him: 'But if you refuse and if the extreme left elements, as I think, will take power,

36 Ivanov, *Otrechenie*, Bakhmeteff, p. 1; Ganelin 2014f, p. 420.

37 Ivanov, *Veliki Kniaz'*, Bakhmeteff, p. 3.

38 Ivanov, *Velikii Kniaz'*, Bakhmeteff, p. 10, Ganelin 2014f, p. 424.

you have nothing to do with this. [But] you are contributing to the historical certainty with those who could not hold power'. Mikhail smiled – and that was the only time he smiled during the fateful night – and answered: 'You are frightening me. Let's hope that God will not permit such terrible ordeals'. As he departed, Ivanov thought: 'One Michael Romanov began the dynasty, and another Michael Romanov is capable only of ending it'.³⁹

Within the extant literature there are so many facts that contradict this version of events that we have to take N.N. Ivanov's account with a grain of salt. But the question remains: when did Mikhail learn about Nicholas's decision to thrust the throne on him? It is known that Nicholas sent him the following telegram from Sirona Railway Station, addressed to 'Your Imperial Majesty Mikhail': 'The events of the last days forced me to make an irrevocable decision for this extreme step. Forgive me, if this has caused pain for you and if you did not expect this. I will for ever remain a faithful and devoted brother'.⁴⁰ But we do not know whether Mikhail received this telegram or, if he did, when. Nonetheless, it is hard to believe that Mikhail was fast asleep when Nicholas's decision was made, when the Duma Committee and the provisional government members had already learned of Nicholas's abdication before Rodzianko and L'vov returned to the Tauride Palace. The details of N.N. Ivanov's accounts contain questionable assertions, but it may well be that Mikhail Aleksandrovich had already received the news about his brother's decision, and made up his mind to renounce the throne. The sleepless night the grand duke spent at Millionnaia 12 was the fateful night for the Romanovs, as the night at Varennes was for the Bourbons in France.

The Grand Duke Receives the Duma Committee and the Provisional Government Members

At 9:15 a.m. the members of the Duma Committee and the provisional government gathered at Princess Putiatina's apartment at Millionnaia 12 to attend the last ceremony of the passing of the Russian monarchy.⁴¹ The luxurious apart-

39 Ivanov, *Otrechenie*, Bakhmeteff, pp. 10–11; Ivanov, *Velikii Kniaz'*, Bekhmeteff, p. 7; Ganelin 2014f, pp. 421–5.

40 Quoted in Startsev 1980, p. 105; Ganelin 2014f, p. 416; Kulikov 2014b, pp. 403–4.

41 For the meeting at Princess Putiatina's apartment, see Miliukov 1921, pp. 53–5; Miliukov 1955, pp. 316–18; Miliukov 1978, pp. 38–9; Kerensky 1927, pp. 68–71; Kerensky 1965, pp. 215–16; Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 235–8; Deposition of Guckov, Padenie 1926, vol. 6, pp. 266–8; Guchkov's account in Basily 1973, pp. 143–5; Rodzianko 1922,

ment, protected by the guards of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment, with its elegant furniture and carpets, was suddenly invaded by 'an unspeakably strange company of people – dirty and unwashed, with creased faces, eyes red and bloodshot from sleepless nights, uncombed hair and wrinkled collars'.⁴² They were the representatives of the provisional government – Prince G.E. L'vov, Miliukov, Kerenskii, Nekrasov, Tereshchenko, Konovalov, Godnev, and V. L'vov – and from the Duma Committee – Rodzianko, Efremov, Karaulov, Shidlovskii and Rzhnevskii.⁴³ Curiously, Shingarev, Miliukov's faithful colleague, was absent, perhaps because he himself had been converted to the anti-Miliukov camp but could not bear the thought of openly opposing his friend, or perhaps because he was busy with the affairs of the Food Supply Commission. It is interesting to note the presence of the five members of the Masonic organisation – Kerenskii, Tereshchenko, Nekrasov, Konovalov and Efremov. Kerenskii was the most outspoken proponent of Mikhail's renunciation of the crown, and Tereshchenko, Konovalov and Nekrasov actively supported his opinion, although curiously no one then or later mentioned what views Konovalov expressed or whether he even spoke at the meeting.⁴⁴ It is known that Prince L'vov, who, according to Katkov, stood close to the Masonic members, also supported his abdication.

Prince L'vov and Rodzianko expressed the majority opinion of the provisional government and the Duma Committee. They stated that in view of the danger to his person and the provisional government's inability to insure his safety, his abdication was desirable. According to Nekrasov, 'Mikhail Aleksandrovich was very calm, reserved, and proper'.⁴⁵ After Rodzianko presented his view, Nekrasov read the text of Mikhail Aleksandrovich's abdication that he had prepared.⁴⁶ According to the agreement reached before the meeting, Miliukov then presented the minority opinion, the sole voice in favour of the grand duke accepting the throne. He insisted upon the preservation of the monarchy as a

pp. 61–2; Matveev 1952, pp. 141–5; Shul'gin 1925, pp. 295–307; Iablonovskii 1926, pp. 137–46; Mel'gunov 1961, pp. 222–41; Andrei Vladimirovich 1928, pp. 200–1; Paleologue n.d., pp. 239–42; Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 150–1.

42 Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 150.

43 Startsev omits Konovalov and Rzhnevskii from the participants. Startsev 1980, p. 106.

44 According to S.P. Mel'gunov, Kerenskii, Tereshchenko, Nekrasov and Efremov attended the meeting; Mel'gunov 1961, p. 223. According to Guchkov's account, which he dictated to Bazilii, Konovalov was also present and energetically supported Rodzianko. Basily 1973, p. 143.

45 Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 150.

46 Ibid.

necessary prerequisite for the survival of the provisional government and asked the grand duke to take the grave task of leadership upon himself. He talked for a long time, delivering a lecture on constitutional law, to the annoyance of everyone at the meeting. His intention was clearly to prolong the meeting so that he would be supported by Guchkov and Shul'gin, who were on the way from the Warsaw Station. Finally, Guchkov and Shul'gin arrived at the conference at 9:45 after their harrowing experience at the Warsaw Railway Station, described below, and a recess was declared for further exchange of information.⁴⁷

Guchkov and Shul'gin at the Warsaw Station

When Guchkov and Shul'gin had arrived at Warsaw Station in Petrograd, they were welcomed by two separate groups, insurgent soldiers and railway workers. Guchkov was asked by the representatives of the railway workers to attend their meeting and inform them of the recent developments. In the meantime, Shul'gin delivered a passionate speech to the crowds, mostly insurgent soldiers, who gathered at the station. Shul'gin read the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication. He appealed to the people to unite for the salvation of Russia in the face of the external enemy by rallying around the new Emperor, Mikhail, and ended his speech with the words: 'Long live Emperor Mikhail II!' Fortunately for Shul'gin, the crowds responded to his speech with shouts of 'Hurrah!'⁴⁸

After this speech, Shul'gin was called to the telephone at the station, where Miliukov asked him not to make the manifesto public, explaining the rapid deterioration of the situation in the capital and the general mood of the Duma Committee members favouring Mikhail's abdication. He asked Shul'gin and Guchkov to come immediately to the meeting with the grand duke at Princess Putiatina's apartment. Bublikov dispatched his aide-de-camp to Shul'gin and Guchkov. Shul'gin surreptitiously handed the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication to him, since he was afraid that the insurgents might confiscate the important document.⁴⁹

Guchkov was not so lucky. The railway workers were extremely hostile. A speaker, clearly a left-leaning activist, accused the Provisional Government of consisting of rich capitalists and landlords, and asked the audience if their revolution had been accomplished to install a prince – an allusion to Prince

47 Matveev 1952, p. 144.

48 Shul'gin 1925, p. 286; Shulgin 1990, pp. 194–5.

49 Shul'gin 1925, p. 288; Shulgin 1990, pp. 196–7.

L'vov – and an owner of tens of sugar factories into the revolutionary government – an allusion to Tereshchenko. The speaker went as far as to demand the arrest of Guchkov. But an engineer stood up and delivered a persuasive speech against arrest, calming down the excited audience. Thanks to this intervention, Guchkov was saved from arrest, and returned safely from the meeting after his brief speech. From the station Guchkov and Shul'gin rushed to Millionnaia 12 in a car made available by a sympathetic soldier.⁵⁰ The different reactions to Shul'gin and Guchkov illustrate the volatility of the crowd with regard to the issue of the monarchical system.

Mikhail Renounces the Throne

In the meantime, after the recess in Princess Putiatina's apartment, Kerenskii spoke first:

Your Highness. I am by conviction a republican. I am against a monarchy ... Permit me to speak to you as a Russian to a Russian. Pavel Nikolaevich Miliukov is wrong. By assuming the throne you do not save Russia. I know the mood of the masses – the workers and the soldiers. At present sharp dissatisfaction is directed at the monarchy. Precisely this issue will become the cause for bloodshed.

At the end Kerenskii threateningly reminded the grand duke: 'I cannot vouch for the life of Your Highness'.⁵¹ Kerenskii's speech was tantamount to pointing a gun against the grand duke's temple.

Next Guchkov spoke. He appealed to the patriotism and courage of the grand duke and pointed out that the Russian people would need the 'living embodiment of a national leader'. 'If you are afraid to take up the burden of the imper-

⁵⁰ Shul'gin 1925, pp. 289–94. Tugan-Baranovskii interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 123; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsia* 1996, pp. 143–4; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 278–9. There are contradictions between Shul'gin's account and Tugan-Baranovskii's. Tugan-Baranovskii states that the Military Commission dispatched its representative to rescue Guchkov from the workers who gathered near the Technological Institute. If Guchkov and Shul'gin did not use the automobile dispatched either by Bublikov or by the Military Commission, then they must have been cautious to avoid using it and decided to use the automobile provided by the insurgents.

⁵¹ Shul'gin 1925, pp. 299–300. According to Startsev, Kerenskii was the second to speak after Rodzianko. Startsev 1980, p. 106.

ial crown', Guchkov continued, 'you should at least agree to exercise supreme authority as the "Regent of the Empire" during the vacancy of the throne.'⁵² The proposed change in policy was huge. If this view were to be accepted, Nicholas's double abdications would have to be repudiated, and the abdication manifesto signed by Nicholas would have had to be amended. Since Nicholas had left Pskov and was travelling by train on the way to Mogilev, it would have been impossible to renegotiate with him and obtain his signature for the new abdication manifesto. Because of these implications, no one took Guchkov's proposal seriously, but his change of heart had the effect of weakening Miliukov's position, and simultaneously Guchkov's standing in the eyes of the attendees at the meeting.

Mikhail then asked for Shul'gin's opinion. Shul'gin replied that when the majority of the provisional government members were opposed to Mikhail's assumption of the throne, he did not have the courage to advise the grand duke to take the throne.⁵³ Considering their spur-of-the moment acceptance of Nicholas's change of heart at Pskov, Guchkov's and Shul'gin's statements were stunningly irresponsible, devoid of any sense of personal responsibility.

Deserted by the monarchists he counted on, Miliukov responded to Kerenskii's statement. Although it was true that the assumption of power would mean to risk the personal safety of the grand duke, and for that matter of the ministers, 'such a risk must be taken for the interest of the fatherland'. Moreover, he pointed out that there was still the possibility of gathering the military force necessary to protect the grand duke. The government could move to Moscow, assemble reliable military forces, and march against revolutionary Petrograd. Alarming to other participants, he was talking about the possibility of initiating a civil war. With rumpled white hair, his face grey from sleepless nights, he 'croaked' in a hoarse voice for a long time, more than an hour, without having anyone interrupt him.⁵⁴

Mikhail, who by then had shown signs of impatience, asked for half an hour to deliberate the matter quietly by himself. As he retired, Kerenskii leapt up and called out: 'Promise us not to consult your wife'. There had been a persistent rumour that his wife, Countess Brasova, had been active on behalf of her husband. The grand duke answered with a smile: 'Don't worry, Aleksandr Fedorovich, my wife isn't here at the moment. She stayed behind at Gatchina.'⁵⁵

52 Deposition of Guchkov, *Padenie* 1926, vol. 6, p. 267; Basily 1973, p. 144; Paléologue n.d. p. 240.

53 Shul'gin 1925, p. 310.

54 Mel'gunov 1961, p. 227; Shul'gin 1925, p. 297; Startsev 1980, p. 109.

55 Paléologue n.d., pp. 240–1; Basily 1973, p. 144; Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 151.

It should be noted, however, that at this crucial juncture, the candidate to succeed the throne was placed under a virtual house arrest without being allowed to consult anyone outside of the apartment.

A few minutes later the grand duke invited Rodzianko and Prince L'vov to his room. When he left the room to enter the grand duke's private room, Rodzianko remarked: 'He cannot reign, and he knows it'.⁵⁶ While waiting for his decision, Guchkov tried to telephone his wife to tell her that he had returned from Pskov. But no sooner had he started to speak than Kerenskii rushed to him and inquired: 'Where are you telephoning? Whom do you want to talk to?' Kerenskii suspected that Guchkov was contacting a detachment to arrest the members of the provisional government. Only after Guchkov explained that he was talking with his wife, did Kerenskii, still suspicious, let him continue with his call.⁵⁷ Considering Guchkov's close associations with the General Staff officers, Kerenskii's suspicion might be excused, but this episode highlights the hypertension that filled the air at the meeting.

The grand duke asked Rodzianko and L'vov only one question: whether his life would be guaranteed if he were to accept the throne. Rodzianko bluntly gave him a negative answer. Mikhail then and there made up his mind to refuse the throne. Actually there was not much else he could do. Rodzianko and L'vov, with whom he had maintained close political contact for the past few months, advised against the assumption of the throne. A majority of the provisional government did not support him. Moreover, he must have been aware of the illegality of his succession. Mikhail also knew of the opposition of other grand dukes to his assumption of power.⁵⁸ Having re-entered the room where the members of the Duma Committee and the provisional government were anxiously waiting, Mikhail announced: 'Under these circumstances I cannot assume the throne'.⁵⁹

According to Nekrasov, Kerenskii asked the Grand Duke not to talk on the phone except for his wife. If we believe N.N. Ivanov, the grand duke's answer was not true, since thanks to N.N. Ivanov's intervention, Countess Brassova had secretly joined her husband at Countess Putiatina's apartment during the night. See above. It is possible, though unlikely, that Countess Brassova was in the apartment without anyone at the meeting knowing it.

56 Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 151.

57 Basily 1973, pp. 144–5; Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 150–1, 154.

58 Paley n.d., p. 57. Grand Duke Nikolai Mikhailovich, who had been banished from Petrograd on 1 January, returned to the capital on 2 March and met Mikhail. But in his memoirs, Nikolai Mikhailovich did not refer to his meeting with Mikhail. See Masson, 1968, pp. 157–61.

59 According to Shul'gin, he could not finish the sentence, because he was crying. Sulgin 1990, p. 206. But this account is not corroborated by other witness accounts.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon. At this moment the three-hundred-and-four year old Romanov dynasty ended. Kerenskii, overwhelmed with joy, said to the grand duke: 'Your Royal Highness, you have acted nobly and like a patriot. I assume the obligation of making this known and of defending you'.⁶⁰ It was not the last time Kerenskii made a promise that he could not keep. Kerenskii's joy was not shared by the majority who assembled there. Nekrasov confessed: 'I was a passionate supporter of abdication, but when the moment came, I felt all the weight of this decision fall on my shoulders'.⁶¹ Miliukov laconically commented: 'At the base of it one did not sense love or anxiety for Russia, but only the grand duke's fear for himself'.⁶²

Did the Grand Duke Abdicate or Renounce the Throne?

It was necessary to make public a written statement announcing Mikhail's refusal to assume the throne. Nekrasov had already written the first draft of the manifesto, but it was unsatisfactory since it mentioned nothing about the position of the provisional government.⁶³ But the members of the Duma Committee and the provisional government, after many sleepless nights, were not in any physical and mental condition to compose a coherent statement. Most of the participants in the meeting, declining the invitation by Princess Putiatina for a late breakfast, had left the apartment. It was decided that two jurists, V. Nabokov of the General Staff at Petrograd and Baron B.E. Nol'de in the ministry of foreign affairs, should be summoned to assist the grand duke to compose the proclamation.

Nabokov and Nol'de were joined by Shul'gin and set out to write a draft on a child's desk in the children's room in the apartment. The most important question that occupied the attention of the authors of the manifesto was its political implication. Nabokov stated:

Under the conditions of the moment, it appeared to be essential to utilise this act, without limiting ourselves to its negative aspect, to confirm solemnly the *plenitude of power* of the Provisional Government and its continuing tie with the State Duma [italics by TH].

60 Kerensky 1927, p. 70.

61 Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, p. 151.

62 Miliukov 1978, p. 39.

63 Nol'de 1930, p. 144; Nekrasov interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 150, 151.

For this purpose they inserted the phrase in the manifesto: 'I ask all citizens of the Russian State to pledge allegiance to the provisional government, which came into being at the initiative of the State Duma and which is endowed with full power'. The final draft was sent to the grand duke for approval. He made three revisions. The pronoun, royal 'We' was changed to 'I', since the grand duke insisted that he had not assumed the throne, and he was never the emperor. Second, the verb, 'command' was changed to 'ask'. Finally reference to God was included.⁶⁴

Finally, the draft manifesto was approved by Mikhail at 4:30 in the afternoon and sent to the Tauride Palace for the provisional government's approval. Around the same time Bublikov's assistant, Lomonosov, brought the copy of the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication, which Shul'gin had handed to Bublikov's aide-de-camp at the Warsaw Station. The joint meeting of the Duma Committee and the provisional government decided to issue the two manifestos side by side.⁶⁵ But Nabokov and Miliukov began arguing heatedly about the form of Mikhail's manifesto. Miliukov insisted that it should be issued in the name of Mikhail II, the emperor, as the manifesto of abdication, but Nabokov did not accept this argument and insisted that Mikhail's title as emperor would not only invite suspicion from the members of the imperial family but also would highlight the illegal decision by Nicholas II to transfer supreme power to Mikhail. After a long discussion, Miliukov finally yielded and it was decided that it should not be a manifesto of abdication but rather a manifesto to decline the assumption of supreme power. Miliukov lost the battle again. Lomonosov sarcastically remarked that on the top of the two manifestos one might add: 'The results of the first six hours of the work of the provisional government'.⁶⁶

When Mikhail renounced the throne, Miliukov and Guchkov resigned from the provisional government. Prince L'vov asked Miliukov's trusted colleague, Nabokov, to persuade Miliukov to stay on. L'vov said that he would not regret parting with Guchkov, but Miliukov was indispensable for the survival of the provisional government.⁶⁷ The Kadet Central Committee members, Vinaver,

64 Shul'gin 1990, p. 208. For the full text of the manifesto, see 'Otrehenie Velikogo Kniazia Mikhaila Aleksandrovicha', *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistov*, No. 9, 4 March, p. 1; 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 144; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 279, 287.

65 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 144; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 279, and endnote 287, p. 339.

66 Nabokov 1922, p. 21; Lomonosov 1921, p. 70.

67 Nabokov 1922, p. 17.

Nabokov and Shingarev, went to Miliukov's home on Basseinaia Street. They argued that Miliukov had no right to quit and deprive the provisional government of the authority that he alone could grant. Finding this argument difficult to refuse, or perhaps his own self-importance well massaged, Miliukov changed his mind, and decided to remain in the government. He went to the evening session of the ministers, where he found Guchkov, too.⁶⁸

Military Leaders React to Mikhail's Renunciation of the Throne

The meeting at Princess Putiatina's apartment on 3 March was kept secret from the military leaders until Mikhail's renunciation of the crown became an established fact. General Alekseev kept trying all day to get hold of Rodzianko, to no avail.⁶⁹ Since their conversation on that morning, Rodzianko had refused to accept any call from Alekseev. Finally, at 6 p.m. Guchkov appeared at the Hughes Apparatus in the War Ministry. Alekseev, ignorant of Mikhail's abdication, demanded that the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication be made public immediately and that the provisional government promptly take measures to enable the soldiers of the active army to take an oath of allegiance to the new emperor. Guchkov replied:

The manifesto of 2 March was given to me by the emperor last night at Pskov. Its promulgation met with difficulties in Petrograd because Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, who consulted with the members of the Council of Ministers, decided to renounce the throne despite my and Miliukov's opinions. It is supposed that the manifestos of 2 March and 3 March – the refusal of Mikhail Aleksandrovich – will be promulgated simultaneously. The promulgation of the two manifestos will be made during the night. The provisional government will remain in power with Prince L'vov at its head and with the composition which is already known to you until the convocation of a constituent assembly.⁷⁰

Alekseev was crestfallen, and hurriedly suggested: 'Is it not possible to persuade the grand duke to accept the power temporarily until the convocation of the [constituent] assembly?' He emphasised that to maintain the cohesion and

68 Miliukov 1955, p. 318.

69 Rodzianko was attending the meeting with Grand Duke Mikhail at Millionnaia.

70 Alekseev–Guchkov conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, pp. 36–7.

morale of the army the retention of the monarchical system would be essential. Guchkov agreed with Alekseev, but stated that no one believed him and that the decision of the grand duke was voluntary and final. Accept the fact and do your best, was Guchkov's advice to Alekseev.⁷¹

No one knows what came to Alekseev's mind at that moment, since he left no personal records to reveal his inner thoughts during the February Revolution.⁷² But it is possible to surmise that, isolated from the rest of the military commanders who had decided to make peace with the provisional government and realising that he was intentionally and hopelessly left in the dark as to the situation in Petrograd, he finally renounced any further active participation in the events.

If Alekseev had been faced with the demand for the end of the monarchical system before 1 March, when he forced Nicholas's abdication, he would have mobilised the military decisively against the revolution, even if it had meant to take arms against the provisional government. He could have counted on Nicholas's support for this attempt, and with Ivanov's forces still near Tsarskoe Selo and other units on the way to join Ivanov, he could have reactivated the plan for military intervention without much difficulty. But on 3 March it was too late. Ivanov had been ordered to return to Mogilev, and a new commander of the Petrograd Military District, General Kornilov, had been appointed. The sentiments of the soldiers had drastically shifted in a radical direction. There were no longer any Romanovs available to head the attempt to preserve the monarchy. Nicholas had abdicated and was travelling as the deposed emperor in the countryside; Mikhail had refused the succession; and Nikolai Nikolaevich had flirted with the provisional government. Since all the counterrevolutionary forces had been recalled and Ruzskii and Brusilov were adamantly opposed to military intervention, there was no longer the possibility of mobilising the military forces against the revolution. Alekseev must have felt that he was checkmated. Neither the king's horses, nor the king's men were available, and more importantly, the king was no more, and there was no one to replace him. Thus Alekseev decided to concentrate all his energy on one single goal – the preservation of the active army.

At 10 p.m. Rodzianko, who did not know that Guchkov had already informed Alekseev of the news of Mikhail's abdication, finally called Alekseev. Rodzi-

71 Ibid., p. 38.

72 I learned from Lyandres that his daughter published his memoirs and diary in the 1990s, and his personal papers are now deposited in the Manuscript Collection of the former Lenin Library. I have not had the chance to use either of these sources.

anko stated that because of the negotiated settlement with the Petrograd Soviet the provisional government had succeeded in containing the anarchy. 'The soldiers' uprisings have been liquidated', Rodzianko reported, 'The soldiers are returning to the barracks, and the city is gradually returning to a decent appearance'. He then requested that the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication finally be made public, together with the manifesto of Mikhail's refusal to assume the throne. Although this was the first time Rodzianko informed Alekseev of the news of Mikhail's refusal to become the new emperor and, therefore, the end of the monarchical system, he gave no explanation as to how he had made this decision. Rodzianko added that although the official announcement of the end of the monarchy had not yet been made, rumours were spreading around the city and 101 salvos were sounded in the Petropavlovsk Fortress.

Alekseev by then, of course, knew how manipulative Rodzianko was, but if he was upset, he did not show his anger in any outward fashion. His suppressed anger could only be guessed at in his couched language. He informed Rodzianko that the Baltic Fleet had been completely taken over by the rebels, and added: 'This was the result of the delay in announcing the contents of the act of 2 March to the sailors'. He further stated that the Petrograd Garrison was out of commission because of the propaganda of the workers, 'against whom apparently no measures have been taken'. All the other reserve regiments, which were infested with the spirit of rebellion, might as well be written off until the restoration of order and discipline. Further, Alekseev informed Rodzianko that he had sent the manifesto of Mikhail's refusal to take the throne to Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, as the latter had instructed him not to make it public to the army until its publication by legal notice. Alekseev then tried to end the communication: 'I have nothing further to add except the words: Lord, save Russia!'⁷³

Rodzianko's comments added insult to injury. 'I sincerely regret', Rodzianko smugly declared, 'that Your Excellency is in such a gloomy and depressed mood ... Here we are all in a bold, decisive mood'. According to Rodzianko, the information he possessed about the Baltic Fleet was not as gloomy as Alekseev had indicated, and the army commanders were as bold and decisive as they had been. He was convinced that the people would come around to unite themselves again with the army. He then insisted upon the necessity of publishing the two manifestos immediately. He added: 'Here we also explain:

73 Rodzianko–Alekseev conversation, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 41; Document 100, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 230–2.

Lord, save Russia, but we also add: Long live strong, great mother Russia, and her glorious, brotherly army and great Russian people!"⁷⁴

Provoked by Rodzianko's paternalistic smugness, Alekseev introduced two telegrams from the Baltic Fleet, which had informed the Stavka that the revolt had spread to all ships, and that the killing of officers had begun. 'You see how quickly events are developing', Alekseev added, 'and how careful we must be in evaluating events'. He sharply pointed out that both senior and junior officers were exerting their utmost effort to maintain the strength of the army.

As for my mood, it has resulted from the fact that I have never allowed myself to be led to an error by those on whom at this moment lies the responsibility before the country. To say that everything was all right and that serious work would not be necessary for recovery would mean to say the untruth.⁷⁵

One must admire Alekseev's courage and restraint in containing his personal feelings. Even this flash of anger at Rodzianko in the telegraphic conversation was restrained. To save the army from disintegration, he did not accuse nor remonstrate against the person who was most responsible for having made a fool of him.

Publication of the Two 'Abdication' Manifestoes

Late on the night of 3 March, the two newspapers in Petrograd – *Izvestiia* of the Petrograd Soviet and *Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh zhurnalistsov* – printed special issues in which large Gothic headlines told the sensational news of the abdication of Nicholas and Mikhail. The Romanov dynasty had fallen.

Nicholas II, the deposed emperor and now citizen Romanov, arrived at Mogilev shortly after 8 o'clock on the evening of 3 March. Two hours before his arrival, he had been informed by Bazili, who met the imperial trains at Orsha at Alekseev's instructions, that Mikhail had refused to assume the throne. As the imperial trains approached Mogilev, the personnel of the Stavka were assembled at the railway station. Nicholas got out of the train, approached Alekseev and embraced him. Then he walked past the persons present. According to Bazili,

74 Ibid, pp. 41–2.

75 Ibid., p. 42.

In silence he saluted each one of us with a handshake, looking into our eyes. All were greatly moved, and stifled sobs could be heard. The emperor kept his apparent calm. From time to time he threw back his head in a movement customary to him. A few tears formed in the corners of his eyes and he brushed them away with a gesture of his hand.

Bazili thought that Nicholas accepted his tragedy with great courage and dignity.⁷⁶

The former emperor wrote in his diary for the entry of 4 March:

At 8:20 arrived in Mogilev. Everyone on the Staff was on the platform. Received Alekseev in the wagon. At 9:30 went to the house. Alekseev brought the latest news from Rodzianko. It turned out that Misha abdicated. His manifesto ends with four-tailed voting in 6 months for the election of the Constituent Assembly. God knows who forced him to sign such rubbish! In Petrograd the disturbance has stopped. Only hope that this will last further.⁷⁷

As the biographers of Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich note, '[g]iven the chaos which he himself had created, and the impossible position in which he had placed his brother, his effrontery had an epic quality about it'.⁷⁸

On 3 March, the same day when the grand duke renounced the throne, the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet passed the resolution to arrest the deposed Tsar, Nicholas, place Grand Duke Mikhail under house arrest, and transport Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich to Petrograd and place him under surveillance. The revolution had already begun to tie the noose around the neck of the fallen imperial family.⁷⁹

On 4 March the Stavka requested the provisional government's permission to arrange Nicholas's trip to Tsarskoe Selo to join his family.⁸⁰ In Tsarskoe Selo, Prince Putiatin, Colonel Geradi of the police, and General Groten (assistant commandant of the palace) were arrested on the order of the commandant newly appointed by the provisional government on 4 March. The soldiers who guarded the palace and the imperial family requested that they be relieved of the oath of allegiance to the tsar and decided to subordinate themselves to the

76 Basily 1973, p. 140.

77 Dnevnik 1927, p. 137; Document 101, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, p. 232.

78 Crawford/Crawford 1997, p. 314.

79 Document 21, *Petrogradskii sovet* 1996, pp. 81–2.

80 Alekseev to L'vov, no. 55, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1927b, p. 54.

provisional government. Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich left Petrograd early in the morning on 4 March for his home in Gatchina.⁸¹ On the same day the new commander in chief, Nikolai Nikolaevich, instructed the army to swear allegiance to the provisional government, without knowing that the Petrograd Soviet had already ordered to deport him to Petrograd.

It was not the Bolsheviks, but the moderate socialists in the Petrograd Soviet who made these decisions against the imperial family with the tacit approval of the provisional government. Here one can hear the echo of Louis-Antoine Saint-Just, who made a plea for the death sentence against King Louis XVI:

What is at issue is not the guilt or innocence of a citizen, someone within the body politic, but the natural incompatibility of someone, by definition, outside of it. Just as Louis could not help but be a tyrant, since one cannot reign innocently, so the Republic whose very existence is predicated on the destruction of tyranny cannot help but eliminate him. All that is needed is the surgical removal of this excrescence from the body of the Nation. A king must die so a republic can live.⁸²

81 Benckendorff 1927, pp. 18–19; Mel'gunov 1961, p. 241.

82 Paraphrased from Schama 1989, p. 651.

The Provisional Government, the State Duma, and the Birth of Dual Power

Rodzianko's Attempt to Elevate the Duma Committee as Supreme Power

From 27 February to 2 March, the Duma Committee functioned as a quasi-revolutionary power. But on 2 March the Duma Committee decided to establish a provisional government, separate from itself. Why did the Duma Committee decide not to declare itself as the provisional government? How did those who established the provisional government see its relationship with the Duma Committee and the State Duma? These questions were closely connected partly with the power struggle within the Duma Committee between Miliukov and Rodzianko, but more importantly with the different conceptions each held about the revolutionary power to be established.

Rodzianko believed that the Duma was the only representative body at the moment that should play a crucial role in the new parliamentary system that was to be created after the revolution until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. Although the State Duma was created under the old regime, the Duma had served as the bastion of opposition to the tsarist government during the war. Moreover, during the revolution, the Duma was the magnet of insurgency. The insurgents marched to the Tauride Palace not merely as a physical gathering place, but because the Duma became the symbol of their revolution. The Duma Committee implemented a series of revolutionary actions, and served virtually as a revolutionary power. The revolution thus changed the nature of the State Duma.

Although the creation of the provisional government, separate from the Duma Committee, was a serious setback for Rodzianko, he still believed that the provisional government that grew out of the Duma Committee should function only as the executive power responsible to the Duma as the legislative power. The Duma would revise and rewrite the Fundamental Laws or approve revisions proposed by the provisional government to fit the post-revolutionary situation. The disappearance of the monarchy made the presence of the Duma all the more important as a guarantor of the smooth transition from the old regime to the new revolutionary order to be determined by the Constituent Assembly.

Thus, even after the Duma Committee decided to establish the provisional government, Rodzianko engaged in a campaign to elevate the Duma and the Duma Committee as a parent body of the provisional government. Rodzianko sent a telegram to General Alekseev at the Savka as well as General Brusilov and General Gurko, stating that the Duma Committee had to take power for restoration of order, but that 'at the present moment power is transferred *by the Provisional Committee of the State Duma* to the Provisional Government headed by Prince G.E. L'vov [*italics by TH*]'.¹ Rodzianko here underscored that it was the Duma Committee that created the provisional government. Furthermore, this telegram requested that the Stavka appoint General Kornilov to be the commander of the Petrograd Military District. It was the Duma Committee and not the provisional government that made this request.²

This telegram was immediately followed by another circular telegram to the heads of the provincial zemstvos and city mayors:

Power has finally been transferred into the hands of *the Provisional Committee of the State Duma*. The members of the old government were arrested and detained in the Petropavlovsk Fortress. The provisional government is being formed, whose composition will be notified to all places and to all persons in the provinces and counties [*oblasti*] of Russia [*italics by TH*].³

In addition, Rodzianko sent a special telegram to Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich in the Caucasus, informing him that 'power has been transferred to the Provisional Committee of the State Duma' and that 'the provisional government is being formed'. This telegram specifically asked the grand duke to give his complete cooperation to the 'Provisional Committee', and 'take immediate measures to remove all conditions that are hindering direct contacts of the Committee with the power and institutions that are subordinated to you'.⁴

1 Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927b, p. 9; 'Protokol sobytii', Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, pp. 136–7; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 269–70.

2 'Protokol sobytii', Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, pp. 136–7; Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1927b, p. 9; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 269–70. Incidentally, it was in response to this telegram that Alekseev requested that Nicholas recall General Ivanov back to Mogilev.

3 'Protokol sobytii', Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, p. 137; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 270.

4 'Protokol sobytii', Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1996, p. 137; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012,

It is important to note that in all these telegrams, the Duma Committee was identified as the body that took power, and that the Duma Committee was appointing the provisional government. In the telegram to Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, Rodzianko went further to mobilise his support for the Duma Committee rather than for the provisional government that was being formed. It was the Duma Committee, not the provisional government, that received diplomatic recognition from Britain, France, Italy and Serbia as the sole representative of power in Russia.⁵ Furthermore the Duma Committee, in the name of the Chairman of the Duma Committee, issued an appeal to the populace stating: 'The difficult time of transition is finished. The provisional government is formed'. Further appealing for calm and the restoration of normal life, it informed the populace that the former commander of the Petrograd Military District, General Khabalov, was arrested and that *the Duma Committee* had appointed General Kornilov to replace him. Until the arrival of Kornilov, Major-General Anosov, commander of the 19th Reserve Brigade, would serve as the temporary commander.⁶ In these telegrams, Rodzianko as the head of the Duma Committee was clearly attempting to elevate the authority of the Duma Committee above the provisional government, including the power to appoint the commander of the Petrograd Military District.

Through the negotiations with the military leaders, Rodzianko attempted to stress that as the chairman of the State Duma and the Duma Committee, he should be considered to be the supreme leader endowed with the power to appoint the chairman of the Council of Ministers. On 3 March, the Duma Committee sent a telegram in the name of the Chairman of the Duma to the Stavka and other front commanders that 'Today the Provisional Committee of the State Duma has appointed the provisional government', before introducing the composition of the provisional government.⁷ As noted in the previous chapter, in his communications with Alekseev and Ruzskii, he presented the 'Supreme Council' of the State Duma, intentionally misstating the name of

p. 270. Exactly what time Rodzianko sent this telegram to Nikolai Nikolaevich is not clear, but it seems more likely that Rodzianko did not know Nicholas had appointed the grand duke as the commander in chief before he signed the abdication manifesto.

5 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 272.

6 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 137–8; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 271–2.

7 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 144–5; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, pp. 279–80.

the Duma Committee, as a co-equal body with the provisional government. According to Startsev, this was tantamount to appointing himself as the president.⁸

It is interesting to note that the two resolutions adopted by the officers after Miliukov's speech on 2 March recognised the Duma Committee, not the provisional government, as the legitimate power. The first resolution unanimously adopted by 'officers who are in Petrograd' resolved to support the Duma Committee, and the second adopted by more than 2,000 officers who met in the hall of the building, Army and Fleet, pledged 'to recognise the power of the Executive [Provisional] Committee of the State Duma in administering the state of Russia until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly'.⁹ These resolutions indicate that at least in the eyes of the officers the prestige of the Duma Committee surpassed that of the provisional government. It is also possible to speculate that the officers' support may have pushed the rank-and-file insurgent soldiers further against the Duma Committee.

Rodzianko further pursued the alternative to institutionalise the Duma as the parent body of the provisional government. But it appears that he did not have support even from the Duma Committee members. Guchkov, concerned with the legitimacy of the provisional government, 'empty above, and bottomless below', proposed that the Duma obtain the sanction of the people by quickly reelecting additional deputies by some form of 'reform [*perelitsovka*]' used by zemstvos and city dumas. Shingarev flatly rejected this idea, noting that the Duma would never serve as the legislative chamber. Guchkov also contacted the members of the Duma Committee, but received only the support of Rodzianko and V.A. Maklakov. The idea of resurrecting the reformed Duma as a legislative chamber was effectively blocked by the Kadets.¹⁰

Nevertheless, Nikolaev cites many sources that indicated that a broad segment of society, including the workers, perceived Rodzianko as the supreme leader now that the Tsar had abdicated and the Grand Duke had renounced the crown. Many zemstvos and local administrations pledged allegiance to the Duma Committee. Military leaders often pledged allegiance to the Duma Committee as the supreme power representing the Duma to which the provisional government should be subordinated. Likewise, the Congress of Representatives

8 Startsev 1980, p. 104; Nikolaev 2005, pp. 555–6. Also see the significance of the first declaration of the provisional government issued in the name of Rodzianko, Startsev 2005b, pp. 212–13.

9 'Protokol sobytii', *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 138–9; 'Protokol zasedanii', Nikolaev 2012, p. 272.

10 Guchkov 1993, p. 123; Mel'gunov 1961, p. 363.

of Industry and Trade and the Central War Industry Committee recognised the State Duma as the highest government power.¹¹ Nikolaev laments that historians often ignore the great popularity that Rodzianko enjoyed at that time.¹² In other words, the end of the monarchy with Mikhail's renunciation of the crown did not diminish the authority of the Duma Committee as the supreme organ of the Duma, but, on the contrary, it enhanced it. Nikolaev further points out that on 2 March, that is, after the decision to form the provisional government was adopted, Rodzianko instructed Glinka to establish the Administration of the Affairs of the Duma Committee, clearly intended to compete with the provisional government for supreme power.¹³

Thus, Nikolaev argues that the prestige and the popularity of the Duma was at its peak when the monarchy was ended. Why, then, did the provisional government not utilise the prestige of the Duma as a source of its legitimacy?

Miliukov Rejects the Duma as a Source of Legitimacy of the Provisional Government

The most influential proponent for breaking the provisional government's ties with the Duma Committee and the State Duma itself was Miliukov. Although he emerged as the most influential member of the provisional government, Miliukov was acutely aware of Rodzianko's still formidable popularity and the prestige that the Duma and the Duma Committee enjoyed. He was eager to destroy his rival and the institutional basis on which Rodzianko's popularity rested. But this was not merely motivated by Miliukov's personal desire to stick a knife in his rival's back, it was also based on his concept of the provisional government as a revolutionary power. He believed that the reliance on the Duma as a source of legitimacy of the provisional government meant to drag out the legacy of the old regime. The Duma and the Duma Committee as its executive organ would hinder the free hand of the provisional government. If the provisional government was limited merely as an executive power responsible to the Duma, this would limit the scope of its power. Miliukov was therefore prepared to jettison the Duma as a relic of the old regime, and wanted to establish the provisional government unencumbered by the Duma. In his conception, the

11 Documents 66 and 67, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 189–90.

12 Nikolaev 2005, p. 556. As for telegrams pledging supporting the Duma Committee, see *ibid.* p. 474, for the support of zemstvos and local governments, *ibid.*, pp. 574–6, and for Ruzskii's declarations to the populace, see pp. 576–7.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 557–8.

provisional government should combine all executive, legislative and judiciary power, in fact, a dictatorial power in the transitional period until the Constituent Assembly was convened, without being restricted by any other institutions, above all, the State Duma.

There is a puzzle in Miliukov's position. Why was he so determined to reject the Duma as a source of the legitimacy of the provisional government, when he was so adamant in arguing for the preservation of the monarchy by insisting on Grand Duke Mikhail's assumption to the throne? There was actually a huge difference between legitimacy coming from Mikhail's anointment of the provisional government and legitimacy based on the Duma. Once power was granted to the provisional government by Mikhail, the new emperor was a mere figurehead, exerting no actual power over the provisional government. The imperial chancellery was destroyed, with its members arrested, and the new emperor would have no institutional body to rely on except for the provisional government. But if the provisional government were to be based on the legitimacy of the Duma, then its activities would be encumbered by and answerable to the Duma, headed by a formidable rival and its institutional mechanism intact, depriving the provisional government of absolute authority.

Furthermore, the Duma, which was founded on the undemocratic electoral law that largely disfranchised the lower strata of society, was not truly a representative body, and it would be perceived by these disfranchised people, above all by the insurgents and the Petrograd Soviet that represented them, as a relic of the old regime, not representing their interests. It was not merely a matter of rejecting the Duma based on Stolypin's notorious change of the electoral law on 3 June 1907, but also the very nature of the Fundamental Laws to which the Duma owed its existence and that had subverted the democratic principles enunciated by the October Manifesto of 1905. In other words, the Duma was brought into the world in a state of original sin, from which a revolutionary power should cleanse itself at last. Rodzianko and the Duma had to go, not only because Rodzianko was Miliukov's political rival, but because he and the Duma would serve as a brake on the new revolutionary course on which the provisional government was about to embark, and would also serve as a negative ballast, sinking the provisional government in the eyes of the Petrograd Soviet.

Under Miliukov's leadership, the Central Committee of the Kadet Party decided on 3 March to suspend the activities of the Duma Committee and not to call the Duma to session.¹⁴ Miliukov, Nekrasov, Rodichev and Shingarev

14 *Vestnik partii narodnoi svobody*, No. 1, p. 13, quoted in Nikolaev 2005, p. 581.

were bound by this resolution. 'The Duma played out its role', Miliukov told a Kadet Duma member P.D. Dolgorukov, 'and, since elected on an undemocratic basis, it cannot be authoritative in such a moment'. He thus advocated for 'the complete power of the provisional government'.¹⁵ When a large, powerful Kadet bloc dropped out, the Duma Committee naturally could not function.

On 3 March, the provisional government had its first meeting.¹⁶ Neither Rodzianko nor other members of the Duma Committee without the ministerial portfolio were invited to attend.¹⁷ At this meeting Prime Minister L'vov

raised the question about the need to precisely determine the scope of power possessed by the provisional government until the Constituent Assembly established the form of government and the Fundamental Laws of the Russian State, likewise, [the question about] the relationship between the provisional government and the Provisional Committee of the State Duma.

The minutes of this meeting revealed the view that prevailed at the meeting. According to this view, 'the entire plenitude of power that belonged to the monarch must be considered transferred, not to the State Duma, but to the provisional government'. This raised the question of the continuing existence of the Duma Committee and resumption of the session of the State Duma. On this the provisional government resolved:

There is no basis to suppose that the provisional government can take measures of legislative character [only] when the Duma is not in ses-

15 Dolgorukov 1964, p. 13; Nikolaev 2005, p. 582.

16 The minute of this meeting was first published by Storozhev (Storozhev 1922, pp. 143–4), but he dated the meeting as 2 March. The document is included in the collection of documents in 1996 (Document 55, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 161–2), which followed the same date. Historians have treated this date as accurate. For instance, Startsev 1980, pp. 114–16. The question of the date of this meeting was first raised by Semion Lyandres at the AAASS convention in 1994 (Philadelphia) and in 1996 (Boston). Nikolaev convincingly argued that this meeting could not have been held on 2 March, since it referred to three events that took place only on 3 March. Nikolaev 2005, pp. 562–3.

17 The following members attended the meeting: G.E. L'vov, Miliukov, Tereshchenko, Kerenskii, Shingarev, Godnev, V.N. L'vov, Nekrasov. Nikolaev 2005, p. 562. Guchkov and Konovalov must be absent, although Miliukov remembered that Guchkov was present at this meeting. Miliukov 1955, p. 318. In addition to this list, Glinka, Baron Nol'de and Nabokov were present as secretariat and legal advisers to the provisional government.

sion by applying Article 87 of the Fundamental Law, since after the just completed revolution in the state [*posle proisshedshchego gosudarsvennogo perevorota*] the Fundamental Laws of the Russian State must be considered invalid. Therefore, the provisional government must establish not only in the sphere of legislation as well as in administration the norms that it considers appropriate to the current time.

Finally, to explore further these issues, the provisional government created a special commission inviting the experienced specialists, Kokoshkin, Lazarevskii and Baron Nol'de, and from the Duma, Adzhemov and Maklakov.¹⁸

This is an astonishing document. This meant that the provisional government had inherited the absolute power enjoyed by the tsar – or perhaps more power than the emperor had enjoyed, since the emperor's power had been limited by the Duma – and established itself as a dictatorship without answering to the Duma or any institutions. If the entire Fundamental Laws were declared invalid, then the provisional government would be the sole authority to enact and interpret the laws. Citing this document, Startsev argues that the provisional government established itself as parliamentary dictatorship unlimited by any law, and decided to throw the Duma under the bus.¹⁹ But the term 'parliamentary dictatorship' is a misnomer, since the provisional government was not answerable to any parliament. It is more appropriate to call it, as Savich does, an 'autocratic oligarchy'.²⁰ In fact, it was tantamount to proclaiming itself as the state [*gosudarstvo*], not merely a government [*pravitel'stvo*] within the state. Here we can see the full meaning of Miliukov's statement in the Tauride Palace that the provisional government derived its legitimacy from the revolution.

Nevertheless, Nikolaev argues that the 3 March meeting of the provisional government was not the final decision on this issue. In fact, there was opposition. Ia.V. Glinka, who participated in the meeting as the secretary of the provisional government, and who was supposed to record the official minutes of the meeting, failed to do so, or more likely refused to produce it, since he strongly disagreed with the conclusion of the meeting that decided to 'destroy the State Duma, that is to say, to sweep from its own feet the very foundation on which it [the provisional government] should be founded'.²¹ Nikolaev argues that des-

18 Storozhev 1922, p. 143; Document 55, *Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia* 1996, pp. 161–2.

19 Startsev 1980, p. 116.

20 Savich 1993, pp. 224, 225.

21 Glinka 2001, p. 184; B.M. Vitenberg, 'Iakpov Vasil'evich Glinka: Zhizn' v epokhu peremen', *Iz glubiny vremen: Al'manak*, SPb, 1998, No. 10, p. 190, quoted in Nikolaev 2005, p. 563.

pite its position the Fundamental Laws became null and void as the result of the February Revolution – although it is not clear at what point – on 27 February or 3 March, the provisional government continued to take the position that the Fundamental Laws remained in force, and further, it never repealed Article 87 of the Fundamental Laws.²²

With this decision, Miliukov and the Provisional Government were clearly overstepping their boundary. The mere declaration to ignore the Duma and the Duma Committee did not put an end to their existence. The Military Commission created by the Duma Committee continued to function. The Higher and Lower investigating committees created by the Duma Committee continued their work. The Duma also continued to perform such tasks as appointments to the Red Cross and other philanthropic institutions. More importantly, the Duma and the Duma Committee had firm control over ministerial bureaucracies, having appointed commissars to each ministry and government agency. The Provisional Government, despite its brave pronouncement about its dictatorial power, had to consult the Chairman of the State Duma with appointments of regional commissars and the new commander-in-chief. In fact, the recent study by E.S. Gavroeva demonstrates that at least for two months after the February Revolution there was close and constant contact between L'vov and Rodzianko on a number of issues.²³

Moreover, as Nikolaev argues, this radical position to completely break with the Duma apparently met resistance from other members of the provisional government, and even from some Kadet members. According to Nikolaev, Kadets continued to keep the Duma as a reserve force to replace the provisional government.²⁴ In addition, some members of the provisional government were hesitant to make a complete break with the Duma.²⁵ Then the question is, why did Miliukov's position prevail? Why did the provisional government refuse to exploit the prestige of the Duma as its source of legitimacy?

22 Nikolaev 2005, pp. 563–72.

23 Gavroeva 2016, pp. 198–201.

24 Nikolaev 2005, p. 583.

25 Nikolaev cites Godnev, V.N. L'vov, Konovalov, and more importantly Kerenskii as those who were hesitant to make a complete break with the Duma. See Nikolaev 2005, pp. 584–6.

The Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet

The answer to this question is given in the second part of the first meeting of the provisional government. The record of the meeting stated that the provisional government had to take into consideration the opinion of the Petrograd Soviet. Nevertheless, 'to allow its views to interfere in government decisions would be an unacceptable dual power'. The consultations with the Petrograd Soviet should be conducted only through 'private conferences' before the questions would be posed at the official meeting of the Soviet.

It is interesting to contrast the provisional government's cavalier dismissal of the Duma and the careful consideration it gave to the Petrograd Soviet, placing far more weight and seriousness on the latter. When the provisional government decided to break with the Duma, it did so, taking into full consideration that its allegiance to the Duma would alienate the Petrograd Soviet whose support was a *sine qua non* for its existence.

Herein lies the essence of the birth of dual power. What took place in Petrograd was not an upheaval, but a revolution. Revolution defied and negated the old order, though a clear new order had not yet been established. The Duma Committee acted as a revolutionary power, and played a crucial role in overthrowing the monarchy. But in the final analysis it failed to create a new order that incorporated the insurgent masses. There was little middle ground between the revolution and the old order, and anything that emanated from the old order – including the Duma, and the Duma Committee that grew out of the Duma – was tarnished, regardless of its intentions and whether it supported the revolution. Theoretically, as Makakov argues ten years after the February Revolution and Miliukov insisted in a fleeting moment at Princess Putiatina's apartment, it might have been possible for the provisional government to ally itself with the army, the bureaucracy and large segments of the population in the country who remained neutral. But this choice would have meant clearly that the liberals should have stood against the insurgents in Petrograd to pit the country against revolutionary Petrograd. Psychologically as well as ideologically, it was impossible for the liberals to take such an action, at least not yet.²⁶ The provisional government's legitimacy, based on the institution of the old regime, was irrevocably destroyed. All the legal order that was based on the old regime was thrown into limbo. Until the Constituent Assembly established the new constitutional order, the provisional government had to assume the role of sole judge over any constitutional disputes, and the source of its judgement had

26 Makakov 1927, pp. 10–13.

to be based on 'revolution'. This source was paralysed by the Petrograd Soviet's 'conditional support', and behind the Petrograd Soviet, a small group of radical socialists who questioned the very legitimacy of the provisional government had already begun to demand the creation of a provisional revolutionary government to replace it.

Six years after the February Revolution, Peshekhonov wrote an insightful observation on the provisional government as a revolutionary power. He observed that on 27 February, the old state power was destroyed, but 'the provisional government that was purported to replace it in the actual sense was not a government power, but rather merely a symbol of that power, a carrier of this idea, at best its embryo'. The provisional government, he continued, could not and dared not transform itself into a real power. The government apparatus, the court, the police and other organs attached to the state were destroyed, and the military units that participated in the revolution could not serve as a prop to support the government. This destructive process soon spread to the entire country.

Who is going to force the population to obey the will of the state [*vlast'*] and how? ... Exhortations alone will not do. What is needed is a systematic insistence with which it will not hesitate to make use of repression. Will a new power find the stern determination to take up this dirty business? Or, will it refuse to do it, as it did on the first days of its existence? In that case, it is clear that it will never become a real power.²⁷

Neither Miliukov nor Guchkov, nor any members of the provisional government, dared to take up this challenge. Nor would Rodzianko have done so, had he taken power.

That left one organisation that could have exercised coercive power: the military. As I argued in previous chapters, Alekseev's attempts at counterrevolution were serious. Despite the widely believed myth that Ivanov's troops melted away as soon as they encountered the revolutionary forces, there never were any revolts among his troops, and they maintained cohesion and loyalty to the end. And yet, as the revolution spread to Moscow, Kronstadt, and the Baltic Fleet, the Stavka's confidence in the loyalty of the troops became shaken. The high command, too, became afraid of the possibility of a popular rising among not only rank-and-file soldiers, but also among the officers. Alekseev and other military leaders were thus reluctant to use force against the revolution.

²⁷ Peshekhonov 1923b, pp. 51–2, quoted in Startsev 1980, p. 128.

Did the Petrograd Executive Committee Transfer Power to the Provisional Government?

When the provisional government decided to jettison the legitimacy from the Duma, the only possible source of its legitimacy was from 'the revolution'. And more specifically, since it did not enjoy the support of the insurgents, it had to rely on the Soviet Executive Committee as a conduit to obtain the support of the insurgents. Herein lies the cardinal importance of the negotiated settlement on the conditions for the Soviet Executive Committee to support the provisional government. The negotiations between the Duma Committee and the Soviet Executive Committee appeared to have achieved the goals that both sides desired. The self-appointed delegates of the Executive Committee succeeded in having the members of the Duma Committee and the provisional government accept their demands as the programmes of the provisional government, while the members of the Duma Committee and the future provisional government gained the support of the Executive Committee for the creation of the provisional government. The success of the negotiations, however, was illusory, since both sides overestimated the influence of the Executive Committee among the insurgent masses.

The Duma Committee mistakenly assumed that the Executive Committee and the insurgent masses who supported the Soviet were an inseparable unit, or at least they believed that the leaders of the Executive Committee had control over the insurgents. The leaders of the Executive Committee, for their part, wishfully hoped that the presentation of the established fact would sway the allegiance of the masses to the provisional government. Yet the insurgent masses were not robots that moved in any direction that the Executive Committee leaders dictated. Nor were they merely a spontaneous [*stikhinnyi*] force. As the process of Order No. 1 showed, they were capable of articulating their voice through their own representatives. Within twenty-four hours after the negotiations were completed, the Duma Committee as well as the leaders of the Executive Committee had to witness the fruit of the negotiations violently snatched out of their hands. The publication of Order No. 1 shattered any hope of the Duma Committee's chance of regaining the support of the soldiers. Steklov's editorial discretion and his speech at the fourth general session of the Soviet on 2 March substantially changed the Executive Committee's assurance of full-fledged support for the provisional government into a half-hearted, conditional endorsement, which fostered suspicion rather than trust among the masses for the provisional government.

The discrepancies between the Executive Committee's original purpose of supporting the provisional government even to the point of weakening its

power base and the later shift of policy in response to popular pressure were among the most important causes for the birth of dual power. The Executive Committee chose to take an ambiguous, inconsistent position on the problem of power without giving the provisional government its full-fledged support or seeking to seize power on its own. Trotskii asks:

The insurrection triumphed. But to whom did it hand over the power snatched from the monarchy? We come here to the central problem of the February Revolution: Why and how did the power turn up in the hands of the liberal bourgeoisie?

His answer is that the moderate socialists who stood at the head of the Soviet voluntarily surrendered the Soviet's already established power to the provisional government, because they believed, for ideological reasons, that power ought to pass to the bourgeoisie.²⁸ Since this interpretation enjoys wide circulation among historians both in Russia and in the West, one must closely examine its assumptions.

Trotskii assumes that the Soviet *was* already a revolutionary power. It is undoubtedly true that the Petrograd Soviet exerted more influence on the insurgent masses in Petrograd than its rival, the Duma Committee. It is true that the Petrograd Soviet took a series of executive measures that ranged from the food supply and the organisation of the militia to tramway fares and permission to publish newspapers.²⁹ Yet one cannot conclusively say on this basis that the real governmental power rested with the Petrograd Soviet. In the first place, it did not possess the coercive power to execute its policy. The support of the insurgent soldiers for the Soviet, particularly after Rodzianko's order, was not immediately translated into a concrete military force capable of enforcing the will of the Soviet. In fact, as Mstislavskii's testimony vividly describes, the military forces available to the Soviet were indeed small. The insurgent soldiers constituted a formidable force for street demonstrations and for lynching officers, but were not nearly strong enough to counter any systematic, organised armed forces. In fact, the Duma Committee's Military Commission had far more power and control over the military units in the capital. The workers did create the workers' militia, but its forces were not well incorporated into the Petrograd Soviet, hardly a military force to counter regular army units.

²⁸ Trotsky 1932, vol. 1, pp. 153, 159.

²⁹ Sukhanov 1923, p. 284; Tokarev discusses the Soviet's control over the city's transportation, postal system and state financial matters. Tokarev 1976, pp. 74–6.

Nor did the Petrograd Soviet consciously attempt to seize the administrative machinery. For instance, it was not the Petrograd Soviet but rather the Duma Committee that seized the huge machinery of the state government. Especially important was the Duma Committee's takeover of the ministry of transport, which controlled railway transportation and the communications attached to it throughout Russia. The process in which the counterrevolution was suspended and Nicholas II was forced to abdicate was solely the work of the Duma Committee, and the Petrograd Soviet and the insurgents had played only a minor role. The Duma Committee took over not only the railways, but the telephones, telegraphs, banks, power stations, water supply and other strategic positions. The Soviet even failed to cut off communication lines between Petrograd and the front, over which the Duma Committee assumed full control. Thus, if the Petrograd Soviet had any semblance of power, it was solely because the insurgents overwhelmingly supported it. The masses had established self-government in the workers' sections of the city in the form of the workers' militia as well as in the military units in the soldiers' committees. These self-governing forces still existed outside the Petrograd Soviet, although the masses who created them pledged allegiance to them. It is hard to imagine, however, that the Petrograd Soviet could have established a government power on the basis of these diverse, uncoordinated self-governments. The Petrograd Soviet, therefore, was never a power and never meant to function as such. Its leaders did not transfer power to the Duma Committee, since there was no power to transfer. The truth was that the leaders of the Executive Committee simply refused to compete for this power.

Why did they refuse to strive for power? As Trotskii states, the ideological imperatives of Menshevism that a bourgeois-democratic revolution should precede a socialist revolution and that the bourgeoisie should carry out the task of this revolution no doubt played an important part. Sukhanov was the main architect of this policy, providing the theoretical foundations for it. Sukhanov writes in his memoirs:

The revolution, which did not bring Russia immediately to socialism, must be led *straight to it* and guarantee complete freedom of socialistic construction in Russia. For this purpose it is indispensable to establish immediately the proper *political prerequisites*: ensure and consolidate the *dictatorship* of the democratic classes ...

The Soviet democracy has to entrust power to the privileged elements, its class enemy; it cannot handle the technique of administration in these desperate conditions of disintegration, nor can it cope with the forces

of tsarism without the participation [of this class] or if the forces of the bourgeoisie are completely opposed to it.³⁰ (Emphasis in the original)

The importance of the ideological imperatives notwithstanding, this was not the only reason why they failed to strive for power. According to Viktor Chernov, the leader of the SR party, neither theory nor doctrine triumphed in the ranks of the Soviet democracy, but it was the direct sensation of the *burden of power* that triumphed, when doctrinaires proposed – with the corresponding theoretical basis – to lift this burden from their shoulders to the shoulders of the privileged class.³¹ Chernov further points out five organisational weaknesses of the Executive Committee, which contributed to its refusal to take power. First, its members gravely differed in their opinions on a number of fundamental issues. They could not have brought up these issues, which a future government would inevitably face, without risking a serious organisational crisis among themselves. Second, while the Duma Committee was represented by the most capable leaders in Russia, the best men of the ‘Soviet democracy’ were absent from the capital. The lesser calibre of socialist leaders, who took the task of leading the Soviet, shrank from the grave responsibilities, ‘which would perhaps have been unbearable even for their leaders’. Third, while the leaders of the Duma Committee were well known throughout Russia, few people except in small circles of the labour movement and socialist groups knew the leaders of the Soviet. Fourth, in contrast to the Duma Committee leaders, who were experts in the technique of administration, the socialists in the Soviet were without experience. Finally, the ‘bourgeois parties’ had had more than ten years of public existence, but the revolutionary parties, thrust upon the open stage from the obscure underground, could not quickly adjust themselves to legal procedures.³²

Their refusal to strive for power was made more determined by their fear of popular pressure from below as much as awareness of their organisational weaknesses. The overwhelming support of the insurgent masses, which showed every sign of driving the Soviet to the pinnacle of power, while granting to it powerful influence, frightened the Soviet leaders. The Russian revolutionary intelligentsia, who had worked tirelessly for more than half a century to incite a mass uprising against autocracy, shrank from the destructive forces suddenly

30 Sukhanov 1922, pp. 230–1.

31 Chernov 1934, pp. 246–7.

32 Ibid. pp. 243 ff.

unleashed. Their sense of alienation from the masses in victory equalled the alienation they had felt in setbacks. Sukhanov warned Miliukov on 27 February of the danger that 'the popular demands ... would inevitably be expanded to the most extreme limits', and that 'the movement would turn into an uncontrollable explosion of *stikhiia*'.³³ Mstislavskii noted that both the leaders of the Soviet Executive Committee and of the Duma Committee had a common fear of the masses. He stated:

The day before yesterday, it had been easy to be leaders of the working class and to make speeches 'in the name of the proletariat', but when ... this theoretical proletariat stood here, side by side, in full height, in full power of its emaciated flesh and of revolting blood ... unintentionally the words of inquietude, instead of militant slogans, began to be tumbled from the pale mouths of the 'leaders'. They grew frightened.³⁴

It would not be unreasonable to assume that the leaders of the Executive Committee found it more comfortable to talk with the representatives of the Duma Committee than to deliver speeches in front of the masses in the general sessions of the Soviet.

Nevertheless, it would be unfair to picture the Soviet leaders during the February Revolution merely as naïve pipe dreamers who missed the opportunity to receive the power presented to them for the sake of their ideological purity, or as knee-jerk cowards who ran scared at the prospect of power. Their decision was partly based on a realistic evaluation of political relations at the time. Skobelev later stated that when he had made speeches to the first group of soldiers who arrived at the Tauride Palace, he was certain that he was making one of his last speeches, and that in a few days he would be shot or hanged. Peshekhonov accepted the position in the Executive Committee, although the thought occurred to him that it might lead him to the gallows.³⁵ All the leaders were painfully aware of the powerlessness and the disorganisation of the revolutionary forces. At the first All-Russian Conference of the Soviets, held on 30 March, Steklov described the general sentiment of the Soviet leaders as follows:

Why was the problem of immediate seizure of power into our hands not raised before us at that moment? ... The first reason is that when an

33 Sukhanov 1923, p. 118.

34 Mstislavskii 1922, pp. 56–7.

35 Quoted in Denikin 1921, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 47; Peshekhonov 1923a, p. 262.

agreement was planned, it was quite uncertain whether the revolution would triumph, not only in the form of revolutionary democracy but even in a moderate bourgeois form. Comrades, you who were not here in Petrograd and have not experienced this revolutionary fever cannot imagine how we lived. Surrounded in the Duma by isolated platoons of soldiers who did not have even noncommissioned officers, and who had not even succeeded in formulating any political programmes of the moment, we knew at the moment that the ministers were meeting at leisure somewhere either in the Admiralty or in the Mariinskii Palace. The atmosphere of the troops in general and the atmosphere of the Tsarskoe Selo Garrison were not known to us and we were informed that they were marching to us. We heard the rumour that from the north five regiments were dispatched, that General Ivanov was leading twenty-six echelons and that in the streets shots were exchanged. We thought that this weak group who surrounded the palace would be crushed. Every moment we expected that they would come and arrest us, if not shoot us. We, like the ancient Romans, sat and spoke with an air of importance, but there was no complete certainty of success of the revolution at that time.³⁶

The members of the Executive Committee shared this deep fear of counterrevolution – which was vividly illustrated by an episode that took place in the middle of the Executive Committee meeting on 28 February. A few machine-gun shots were heard in the courtyard of the palace. Someone shouted: ‘Cossacks!’ Taken by sudden panic, some flung themselves onto the floor, while others started running away from the room. Kerenskii shouted in his shrill voice: ‘Get ready! Defend the Duma! Listen! I tell you, I, Kerenskii, tell you – defend your freedom! Defend the Revolution!’ Sukhanov writes:

There could be no doubt; if the Cossacks or any sort of organised unit had really been attacking us, however negligible their number might have been, we could not have looked anywhere for salvation and they would have conquered the revolution with their bare hands.³⁷

36 ‘Vserossiiskoe soveshchanie deputatov ot Soveta rabocvhih i soldatskikh deputatov’, *Izvestiia Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov*, No. 32, 3 April 1917, p. 4.

37 Sukhanov 1923, p. 200; Tarasonov-Rodionov 1931, pp. 115–16; Shliapnikov 1923c, p. 189.

It turned out, however, that the shots had been fired by a noncommissioned officer of the machine-gun regiment to find his lost leader in the quickest way, which made Kerenskii's hysterical speech look embarrassingly ridiculous.³⁸

The fear of counterrevolution, however, was by no means only paranoia on the part of the Soviet leaders. Steklov's information on the counterrevolutionary forces was not an illusion, but reality. The Soviet leaders believed that the undisciplined soldiers and untrained workers would have been impotent before a large-scale military assault. The only alternative for the survival of the revolution appeared to the Soviet leaders to lie in the possibility of broadening its base so as to include the liberal opposition. If the liberals stood at the forefront of the revolution, it would disguise the intense class contents of the revolution, and it would appear as if it were a patriotic, national revolution, one more palatable to the military leaders. This judgement was quite sound. The Soviet could not have established a revolutionary government without provoking a counterrevolution; and had the Soviet government faced determined resistance from the army in the front, in view of the disorganisation of the insurgents and the ideological disunity among its leaders, it would not have stood for a day. The Executive Committee leaders' decision to help the Duma Committee to form a provisional government thus saved the revolution from taking a precipitous course toward civil war.

Trotskii called the transfer of power by the Soviet leaders to the provisional government 'a paradox of the February Revolution'. Yet close examination of the relations of the political forces demonstrates that there was nothing paradoxical about their refusal to strive for power. They did not have power, nor did they intend to take power. Even if they had so intended, they could not have taken power and maintain it without risking the future of the revolution.

The 'paradox' of the revolution did not lie in the Soviet Executive Committee's 'transfer' of power to the provisional government, as Trotskii claimed. It rather lay in the complex power relations that reflected the reality of the February Revolution. Deprived of the anointment of the monarchical power and consciously breaking with the continuity with the Duma, the provisional government had nothing but the 'revolution' to serve as the sole source of its legitimacy. And yet it was cut off from the insurgent masses, who pledged their allegiance to the Petrograd Soviet rather than to the provisional government. The only way to gain their support was through the Soviet Executive Committee. The provisional government, despite its proclaimed dictatorial power, existed

38 Sukhanov 1923, p. 200. For Kerenskii's explanation of the same incident, see Kerenskii interview, Lyandres 2013, pp. 228–9.

only at the sufferance of the Soviet Executive Committee. And the Executive Committee, despite its desire to see the bourgeois government formed, was constrained by the pressure from below to protect what they gained from the revolution and advance their interests further. When we assess relative power and strength, there was no question about the enormous superiority of the provisional government over the Petrograd Soviet. The paradox of the revolution lay in the fact that the Petrograd Soviet, despite its weakness, disorganisation, and divisions, acquired influence that far exceeded its strength.

Conclusion

The February Revolution was the explosion of two fundamental contradictions in Russia – the revolt of the masses against the established order and the irreconcilable conflict between ‘society’ and ‘state’. The process of what Haimson describes as dual polarisation had steadily progressed after 1905 under the impact of the successful modernisation undertaken by Russia. The outbreak of the First World War at first appeared to halt this process – the liberals pledged to support the government in its effort to win the war and the ‘sacred union’ seemed to close the gap between state and society. The workers’ strike movement that had appeared to be approaching a clash with the regime was silenced at the outbreak of war. But internal peace did not last more than a year. Once a crack appeared in the monolith after the first humiliating defeat of the Russian army, the war that had initially cemented state and society began to rip them apart with ferocious force.

Workers’ Revolt

Sources of the Workers’ Discontent and Revolutionary Parties

The working class provided the most important source of social instability in Russia. Politically disfranchised, culturally and socially segregated, workers constituted the dangerous ‘other’ challenging the established order. At the outbreak of war, the modicum of independence that had existed previously had been brutally taken away. Unlike other classes in society that had formed national organisations to advance their class interests, workers were deprived of such privilege. Whatever modest legal organisations they maintained during the war were severely curtailed by the police. And yet the workers’ labour lay at the foundation of the war effort. As Russian industry rapidly expanded and created a shortage of skilled workers, the workers’ confidence grew in proportion. It was precisely the combination of resentment stemming from their exclusion from privileged society and their growing pride as a distinct and vital class that made the working class in Russia explosively dangerous.

The strike movement was suddenly revitalised in the summer of 1915, and from then on grew in size and militancy. It was by no means a linear development constantly moving upward toward a climax; rather it was characterised by peaks and valleys. But as time went on, the peaks became constantly higher and

the valleys less deep. At the vanguard of the strike movement in Petrograd stood the metalworkers in factories that employed between 1,000 and 8,000 workers, and in particular it was the metalworkers in the Vyborg District who provided the major impetus. Workers in the largest munitions plants and in large textile factories participated in economic strikes, but they generally stayed out of political strikes until the end of 1916. As the new wave of strikes began in January 1917, even these workers merged with the militant metalworkers in the Vyborg District in a series of political strikes. Moreover, the new wave began to involve workers who had not participated in strikes since the war began. The basic trend of the wartime strike movement – to grow ever larger and wider – culminated in the February Revolution.

Just as the workers themselves were alienated from the existing order of society, the workers' movement developed independently of the conflict within the established society. What drove them out of the factories and into the streets for the first major strike during the war was not the defeat of the Russian army but the massacre of fellow workers in Ivanovo-Voznesensk. The prorogations of the Duma and the government's other repressive measures against liberal organisations had little effect on the workers' movement. But the workers showed their class solidarity in the 9 January strikes and in a series of sympathy strikes in protest against the arrests of their leaders.

No doubt such wartime miseries as decline in real wages, inflation, long working hours, deterioration of working conditions, and above all the food shortage contributed to the development of the strike movement. But behind these grievances the workers felt profound resentment toward the established order from which they were excluded. There was little possibility of establishing a united front between the liberal opposition and the workers' movement during the war. All such attempts made either by the leaders of the workers' movement or by the liberals ended in failure.

The growth of the strike movement was not entirely spontaneous. In fact, it would be impossible to organise 'spontaneously' such strikes as happened in August and September 1915, January, March, and October 1916, and January and February 1917. These strikes involved many factories throughout the entire city. Strikes required organisers who planned strategy, agitators who appealed to the workers, orators who spoke at factory rallies, and a network of communication that coordinated activities with other factories. Amorphous grievances of the workers had to be defined in simple slogans. Demonstrations had to be directed to a certain destination through specific routes. Although no single political group could claim exclusive leadership of the workers' movement and it is impossible to measure accurately the influence of the underground revolutionary activists, it is certain that it was the underground activists at the factory

level who provided the workers' movement with important leadership and continuity. They were also assisted by nonparty sympathisers who came to support the hard-core activists.

During the war the revolutionary parties were basically split into two groups: the anti-war alliance of left-wing socialists (Bolsheviks, Menshevik Initiative Group, Mezhraiontsy and left srs) and the moderate socialists that gravitated toward the Workers' Group of the War Industries Committees. Despite the label of 'defencism', the Workers' Group actually opposed the war as detrimental to the interests of the working class. The differences between the two groups revolved around one single issue: the method of achieving a revolution to overthrow the tsarist regime. While the radical anti-war socialists advocated a revolution carried out by the workers, the Workers' Group conceived revolution to be a united struggle against tsarism by all segments of society, one in which the liberal opposition was to play a leading role. For two fundamental reasons the Workers' Group's concept of revolution did not correspond to Russian reality. First, the mainstream Russian liberals, on whom the sole revolutionary hope of the Workers' Group rested, refused to join the workers in the struggle against tsarism. They were frightened by the prospect of revolution from below and were more willing to accommodate themselves to the tsarist regime than to form a united front with the workers against it. Second, the workers' movement developed outside the liberal forces in society. They had little common ground on which to establish a united front. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the existence of the right socialist group centring around the Duma faction (Kerenskii, Chkheidze and Skobelev), who made their desperate attempts to unite the workers' movement with the liberal opposition.

In the latter half of 1916 the anti-war alliance expanded their influence among the Petrograd workers at the expense of the Workers' Group. This is not to say that the programmes of the anti-war groups were wholeheartedly accepted by the masses of workers. But it does indicate that the most militant anti-war stand and their equally militant rejection of the established order were beginning to strike a responsive chord among the worker-activists. As wartime reality hit the workers hard, the anti-war and anti-government propaganda was not incomprehensible to the workers. Their insistence on the insurrection of the masses without the help of any other class in society appealed to the workers' sense of independence and was compatible with their resentment of the privileged society.

Alarmed by the loss of influence, the Workers' Group finally turned in a radical direction in December 1916. It began a massive campaign appealing to the workers to take action to overthrow the tsarist regime. The Workers' Group's new direction was taken in the framework of the overall struggle of the entire

society against the tsarist regime. But the drastic shift from its previous policy of restraining the workers' radicalism into one that encouraged the workers' action against the regime had a significant implication. On the eve of the February Revolution both groups advocated violent action against the regime. In this sense, the conflict between the two groups did not hinder, but rather hastened the development of the revolutionary crisis.

Workers' Revolt in the February Revolution

The February Revolution began with the strike in the textile mills in the Vyborg District when women workers went out into the streets with a single demand – 'Bread' – on 23 February, to commemorate International Women's Day. The strike immediately spread to neighbouring metal factories, and its leadership was quickly taken over by more experienced activists. At least 78,000 workers from 50 factories joined the strike. Although the total number of strikers was much smaller than the 9 January and 14 February strikes earlier in the same year, and the strike movement was limited mainly to the Vyborg District, its militancy far surpassed any of the previous wartime strikes. The strikers systematically employed a tactic of forcible removal, not allowing other workers to continue working. The strikers staged a massive demonstration in the major streets in the Vyborg District, but the police succeeded in dispersing the demonstrators who attempted to cross the Neva to the centre of the city.

On the second day, 24 February, the strike was no longer confined to the Vyborg District, but spread to all the districts in Petrograd. At least 158,000 workers participated and 131 factories were struck, more than doubling the size of the strike on the previous day. For the first time during the war, massive demonstrations were staged along Nevskii Prospekt. The demonstrators no longer passively waited for police assaults, but instead counterattacked. On this day as well, the police and the Cossacks still managed to control the streets and bridges, but with increasing difficulty.

The general strike on 25 February paralysed normal functions in the capital. The strike participants surpassed 200,000, the largest figure since the 1905 Revolution. Almost all factories were closed. No newspapers were published, trams and cabs stopped, many stores, restaurants, and cafes were closed, banks did not open and schools were cancelled. The demonstrators became more vicious in their attacks on the police. Revolver shots were fired, bombs thrown, and police chiefs Shalfeev and Krylov were brutally murdered. Cossacks and soldiers remained half-hearted in their task of suppressing the demonstration. In some cases soldiers openly sympathised with the crowd and attacked the police. For the first time since 23 February the crowds owned Nevskii Prospekt. Political rallies were held continuously on Kazan and Znamenskaia Squares,

where orators spoke freely, without much harassment from the police. The demonstrators boldly hoisted red banners lettered with 'Down with the War', 'Down with the Autocracy'. The workers' strike movement induced hitherto unorganised workers to come out into the streets.

By 25 February the strike movement had reached its peak. But it did not lead to a revolution. It became clear that the workers' movement alone was insufficient to overthrow the regime. On 26 February security authorities in Petrograd, acting on the emperor's order to suppress the unrest, changed their policy and began to shoot and kill the demonstrators. Government troops systematically fired upon the demonstrators. This measure seemed successful. Demonstrators disappeared from Nevskii Prospekt. Even the veteran leaders of the strike movement pessimistically predicted that the movement was coming to an end. But the firing order inevitably pushed the soldiers to choose between their conscience and obedience. On the night of 26 February, the Fourth Company of Pavlovskii Regiment revolted. This was still isolated and easily put down, but it was a harbinger for the soldiers' uprising the next morning.

What would have happened with the workers' strikes and demonstrations on 27 February, after Bloody Sunday on the previous day, had the soldiers' insurrection not taken place? Judging from the strikes and violent demonstrations in the Vyborg District before the soldiers' uprising, it is not hard to predict that Bloody Sunday on 26 February would have precipitated even larger strikes and more violent demonstrations, necessitating even bloodier confrontations with the police and troops in the streets. Given their ineptitude, it is unlikely that the security authorities could maintain the loyalty of the troops to mow down the demonstrators without provoking the soldiers' unrest.

Spontaneity or Consciousness?

Who led the revolution? Was it spontaneous, as often claimed by Western historians? Or was it led by the Bolshevik party, as Soviet-era historians argue? It would be a mistake to characterise the February Revolution, as Chamberlin does, as 'one of the most leaderless, spontaneous, anonymous revolutions of all time'.¹ Historians in the West have long considered the Russian mass movement as controlled by *stikhiia* – that mysterious, savage, elemental force that defies rational analysis. This belief has led them to refrain from examining the dynamics of the mass movement. But on the other hand, it is difficult to subscribe to the theory of exclusive Bolshevik leadership. The Bolshevik party as a whole failed to react to the workers' strike movement quickly and ima-

1 Chamberlin 1935, vol. 1, p. 73.

ginatively. The Russian Bureau led by Shliapnikov was constantly behind the developing events and grossly underestimated the revolutionary potentialities of the movement. The Petersburg Committee was more actively involved in the leadership of the strike and demonstration, but it, too, failed to exert strong influence among the masses, partly because its adventurism often met with repeated police repression, disrupting sustained organisational continuity, and partly because it lacked the resources and a close communication network to coordinate the activities in various districts.

Nonetheless, in such an explosive situation as the February Revolution the existence of 3,000 committed revolutionaries cannot be easily dismissed. The most important Bolshevik organisation, the one that exerted a significant influence on the workers, was the Vyborg District Committee. Headed by the militant Chugurin and led by such experienced party activists as Kaiurov and Sveshnikov, the Vyborg District Committee had placed its 500 to 600 members in strategically important factories. It met frequently from the beginning of the strike movement on 23 February, and from the very beginning worked to expand the movement to its maximum limit. They were the strike organisers at the factory level, stood at the head of the demonstrations, talked the Cossacks out of punitive action against the demonstrators and led the attack on the police. In this sense, Trotskii was partially correct in stating that the February Revolution was led by the lower-rank Bolshevik activists.²

However, the Bolsheviks were but one part of a much larger group of activists. Thanks to Melancon's painstaking works, we now know more about the active role played by the radical wing of the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Mezhraiontsy and the Menshevik Initiative Group. There were 400 to 500 members of the initiative group, 150 Mezhraiontsy, and 500 to 600 radical Socialist Revolutionaries who were scattered in various factories. These activists formed a united front with the Bolsheviks and took concerted action. What was impressive was not what separated them, as the Soviet-era orthodox interpretation insisted, but rather what united them. Moreover, it is important to emphasise that the moderate socialists who supported the Workers' Group actively organised the strike movement. It was these moderate socialists who took the initiative to create the Petrograd Soviet. Despite ideological differences, there emerged a common goal among the activists at the factory level: the transformation of labour unrest into a revolution against the tsarist regime.

To be sure, the February Revolution was not organised in the sense that the revolution in October was. There existed no central headquarters from which

2 Trotsky 1932, vol. 1, pp. 136–52.

all directives emanated. Nor did these activists control all aspects of the movement. But it is important to recognise the existence of these activists, who had acquired experience in strike organisations under the difficult repression that existed in wartime and whose concern was no longer the solution of immediate economic problems but the ultimate overthrow of the tsarist regime itself. Moreover, these activists with affiliations with the revolutionary parties were not isolated from the masses of workers, although their number was small. Surrounding this core of activists were those non-party activists who had not committed themselves to joining the underground revolutionary parties, but who were sympathetic with the causes they espoused. Beyond these activists there were the rank-and-file workers. But many of them already had experience in strikes during the war. Taking these factors into consideration, one must reject the 'spontaneity theory', according to which the masses of workers poured onto the streets spontaneously, trusting only their own destructive instincts.

It is true, however, that the February Revolution gave many workers the opportunity to join the strike movement for the first time. Certainly the sudden appearance of great numbers of workers who had been thrust into the political movement injected an element of 'spontaneity' in the sense that these newcomers were more difficult for the seasoned veteran organisers to control. It is also important to recognise that the city's youths and criminals liberated from prisons also injected an element of lawlessness. The uncertainty of their political allegiances contributed to the blurring of the distinct social content of the February Revolution.

Soldiers' Revolt

Although the workers' strike movement developed during the February Revolution into a general strike that involved virtually all the workers in Petrograd, it did not ensure the victory of the insurrection by itself. One of the crucial differences between the 1905 Revolution and the February Revolution was the soldiers' loyalty. In 1905 there were sporadic attempts by the soldiers to rise against the regime, but on the whole they remained loyal. But the impact of the World War drastically changed the morale of the officers as well as the soldiers.

The reasons for the soldiers' insurrection were not identical with those for the workers' strike movement. If the workers demanded bread, peace and the overthrow of tsarism, the soldiers' grievances were more immediate and were directed against the officers and military discipline. The barrier between soldiers and officers – common in any military force – was even more magnified

in the Russian army because of the peculiar social tensions that existed outside the military units. Barracks life reminded the soldiers – mostly ‘peasants in uniform’ – of the servile life on the landlords’ estates in pre-Emancipation days. They were at the mercy of the officers, subject to beatings, theft and extortion by them, and detailed more often to act as servants in the officers’ club or their households than to actual military training. Officers treated soldiers as landlords treated serfs. Officers had little contact with the soldiers, did not speak the same language, and did not understand them. Left alone, the soldiers managed their barracks life by forming their own self-governing communal organisations without much interference from the officers.

The morale of the reserve units was low. Unlike the front, where there was a possibility of establishing a common bond between officers and soldiers in the face of danger, boredom and regimentation in the rear made the reserve soldiers restless. The influx of older recruits and the existence of sick and wounded soldiers who had been temporarily removed from the front also contributed to declining morale. Moreover, the government’s policy of drafting strike organisers into the army was like throwing matches around on a dry field. But organised revolutionary activities in the military units were negligible, although revolutionary literature was occasionally smuggled into the barracks. More significant was the influence of the general political deterioration in the rear. The trial of Miasoedov, the arrest of Sukhomlinov, rumours of the government’s treason and sensational tales of Rasputin and the empress eroded the hypnotic hold of the sacred oath of allegiance to the tsar. As Colonel Engel’hardt observed, soldiers in the reserve battalions became ‘rather reserves of flammable material than a prop of the regime ... capable at any moment of exercising their own will and their demands’.

If the oath of allegiance ceased to have a magical hold over the soldiers, the prestige of the officers – another important factor to tie the soldiers to discipline – had declined. The most capable officers of the Russian army had either been killed in the first few months of the war or sent to the front where they were most needed. The shortage of officers contributed to the creation of a host of newly commissioned officers with dubious qualifications. It also meant the influx of a new breed of officers who brought into the military units acute political consciousness. Unlike the professional officers of the old generation, they could no longer be indifferent to political developments outside the military. Many openly sympathised with the liberal opposition, and even a few revolutionaries were in the officers’ corps. The ‘transfer of allegiance’ had taken place among the officers long before the February Revolution.

Soldiers' Insurrection, 27 February

Already during the February days, the soldiers' sympathy with the demonstrators was visible. The abortive revolt of the Fourth Company of the Pavlovskii Regiment on the night of 26 February was the initial tremor that touched off the huge earthquake of the soldiers' mass revolt on 27 February. On the following morning, the revolt of the Volynskii Regiment led by a few noncommissioned officers quickly spread to the Preobrazhenskii, Lithuanian Regiments and the Sixth Sapper Battalion. The soldiers' insurrection had begun. Insurgent soldiers crossed the Neva and were united with the workers in Vyborg District who, on their own, had attacked weapon factories and the police station. The insurgents soon occupied the entire Vyborg District. They attacked Kresty Prison, occupied Finland Station, burned the police stations and armed themselves after they occupied the weapon factories. While insurgents continued to attack the barracks of the Moscow Regiment and the Bicycle Battalion, others crossed the Neva and marched to the Tauride Palace. On their way they occupied the Arsenal, seized enormous quantities of weapons and ammunition, and burned the Circuit Court. From then on the insurrection spread to all parts of the city, and by late night almost all the reserve battalions in the city joined or were forced to join the insurrection. Lawlessness and chaos reigned in the streets. Trucks, automobiles, and armoured cars full of soldiers with red armbands zoomed madly around the city, while people armed to the teeth experimented with their newly acquired toys.

The ineptitude of the security authorities contributed to the insurrection's quick spread. Khabalov lost his nerve and stood aimless and ineffectual. All Protopopov could do was to pray to God so that the crisis would go away. The punitive detachment under the command of Colonel Kutepov was isolated from the other loyal troops and disintegrated by evening. Beliaev meddled in the commanding hierarchy and heightened the confusion by issuing conflicting orders. While the insurrection spread in the city, Khabalov, Beliaev and Zankevich moved the loyal troops that had gathered to defend the government aimlessly back and forth between the Winter Palace and the Admiralty. Disgusted by the ineptitude of the commanding hierarchy, the loyal troops disappeared; some marched to the Tauride Palace to join the insurrection. But the greatest mistake made by Khabalov and Beliaev was that they concealed the extent of the crisis in Petrograd from the Stavka until it was too late. By the time the Stavka realised the necessity of dispatching troops from the front, Petrograd was under the control of the insurgents. The amazing ineptitude of the security authorities was testimony to the senescence of a regime that was rotten to the core.

Formation of the Petrograd Soviet

The insurrection had triumphed in Petrograd. Cabinet ministers were arrested and loyal troops disintegrated. But the revolution was far from over. Nicholas II was still alive and well in Mogilev, determined to suppress the revolution by force, and the Stavka wholeheartedly endorsed his decision. In the meantime, the insurrection created anarchy in the streets, but not a revolutionary government to consolidate its gains.

One of the most curious characteristics of the February Revolution was that the insurgents who revolted against the old regime failed to create their own revolutionary government. The two organs that came into being – the Petrograd Soviet and the Duma Committee – had little to do with the insurrection itself. The masses of insurgents still continued to influence the course of events, but their influence was no longer direct. Their continued existence and radical actions provided the general framework, which the political leaders could neither ignore nor defy, providing the general *structure* of the revolutionary process, but the specific course of the revolution was now determined by groups other than the insurgents themselves, where *contingencies* played an important role.

The Petrograd Soviet was created at the initiative of the moderate socialist leaders, whose goal it was to form a centre for the movement to coordinate and organise the activities of the insurgent masses. Despite the strong left-wing preponderance in the Executive Committee, the anti-war groups were not united on the question of power. Particularly important was the confusion of the Bolshevik leadership. As a result the most important policy of the Soviet Executive Committee was formulated by Sukhanov, Steklov and Sokolov, non-party socialists with strong Menshevik leanings. These socialist intellectuals were ideologically more left than the Workers' Group, but on the question of power they consistently maintained that a provisional government to be created by the revolution ought to be a bourgeois government composed of the representatives of the liberal opposition. This basically Menshevik notion, which had been most persistently pursued by the Workers' Group during the war, and that seemed to have gradually lost relevance in the wartime political reality, was ironically espoused by the majority of the Petrograd Soviet leaders and infected even the Bolshevik leaders like Shliapnikov.

The new situation created by the revolution seemed to these leaders to justify the plan to 'transfer' power to the 'bourgeoisie'. There was a basic confrontation between the masses and the established order, and this confrontation became even clearer as the revolution became older. But the Petrograd Soviet leaders accurately judged that revolutionary power emanating solely from the

insurgent masses could not possibly survive. It seemed foolhardy to rest the future of the revolution on those soldiers roaming around the street defying all order and discipline and the armed workers who did not even know how to use weapons. A civil war, if initiated by an organised military unit, would surely crush the young revolution. The leaders of the Soviet Executive Committee thus concluded that, for its survival, the revolution would have to be expanded to include the rest of society. Although its basic content was the social conflict between the masses and privileged society, the revolution would have to make itself appear *obshchestvennyi* – a political revolution involving all segments of society against the tsarist regime.

The challenge to this notion came from two different directions. First, the overwhelming support that the Petrograd Soviet received from the insurgent masses began to transform its nature into something more than the initiators had envisaged. The masses supported the Soviet, not the Duma Committee, thereby accentuating the social content of the revolution. The workers' militia in the workers' districts effectively established its police power, and the district soviets were quickly extending their self-governing authority. The soldiers formed soldiers' committees in their units, controlled weapons and the economy of their units, and began electing their officers. In other words, the insurgent masses began taking care of administrative matters on their own without reference to any outside authority. The source of 'dual power' was derived from the fundamental structural conflict – not from the conflict between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet, but between the insurgents' self-assumed authority and the authority emanating from the privileged element of society. The majority of the insurgents, however, had not yet begun to translate their feelings into conscious revolutionary programmes. They could not offer an alternative to the Executive Committee's policy toward the problem of power, despite occasional manifestations of their latent radicalism on a number of specific issues.

The second threat to the Soviet leaders' policy toward the problem of power came from a small group of radical anti-war socialists led by the Bolshevik Vyborg District Committee, the Mezhraiontsy and the radical Socialist Revolutionaries. From the moment the insurrection triumphed, this group called for the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government in the form of a soviet, and after the Petrograd Soviet was formed, they advocated for the transformation of the Soviet into a revolutionary government. Unlike the Bolshevik leaders led by Shliapnikov, who considered the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government a task for the distant future, these activists proposed this as one of the most urgent tasks of the moment. Although the Vyborg Bolsheviks, the Mezhraiontsy, and the left SRS were still isolated from

the masses of insurgents, there were signs that their proposal might receive wide acceptance. Alarmed by this possibility, the Soviet leaders decided to hasten the formation of a bourgeois provisional government by negotiating directly with the liberal representatives before the militant insurgents could push them into a position where they would have no choice but to assume power.

Revolt of the Liberals against Tsarism

The Liberal Opposition during the War

The revolt of the masses was but one aspect of the February Revolution. If the basic confrontation in the February Revolution was between the masses and privileged society, why did it not immediately lead to a civil war? The answer lies in another aspect of wartime politics: the relationship between state and society. The revolution from below provided the general framework, but the specific course of the February Revolution was determined by the conflict within established society.

The internal peace that the liberal opposition had promised at the outbreak of war did not last beyond the summer of 1915. After the Russian army suffered a humiliating defeat, the liberals began criticising the government. The voluntary organisations became increasingly involved in political questions, while in the Duma liberals formed the Progressive Bloc. After the political crisis of the summer of 1915, the liberals and the tsarist government drifted apart. But contrary to what Katkov claims, the liberals never attempted to take over the tsarist government apparatus. In fact, they never wished for such far-reaching political reform in time of war. The most the Progressive Bloc wished to accomplish was the formation of a ministry of confidence. The mainstream of the liberal opposition led by Miliukov had persistently refused to take drastic action against the government, partly because they feared that such action might provoke a revolution from below, and partly because during the war, despite political animosity, the liberals and the bureaucracy had created a web of interdependent organisations in support of the war effort. The liberals and the government hated and distrusted each other, but they needed each other for survival. Faced with the growing movement from below, the government's intransigence from above, and constant danger of internal splits within the fragile liberal coalition, the liberals remained inactive and powerless. Only a minority attempted to break away from this impasse. The radical wing of the liberals had insisted on the need for an alliance with the mass movement to keep it within reasonable bounds. But these liberals had no tangible influence

on the masses of workers. Another group of liberals became involved in a conspiracy for a palace coup to forestall the outbreak of revolution. Although this course was not accepted by the majority of liberals as a viable alternative, the idea of a palace coup was put into action when the February Revolution took place.

Nicholas II's Intransigence against the Liberals

From the very beginning of the war Nicholas excluded two radical actions he might have taken in dealing with the liberal opposition. On the one hand, he never seriously entertained the proposal made by his reactionary advisors (including his wife and Nikolai Maklakov) that he should break completely with the liberals. On the other, he adamantly stood on his imperial prerogatives, refusing to yield to public pressure to grant a ministry of confidence willing to cooperate with the Duma. Nicholas's political actions during the war were skilful manoeuvres in the narrow passage between these two extremes. When liberals raised their voices, Nicholas gave them concessions sufficient to defuse their radicalism. Dismissals of unpopular ministers, the creation of special councils, the opening of the Duma in the spring and the summer of 1915, Goremykin's dismissal and Trepov's appointment in the aftermath of Miliukov's 'stupidity or treason' speech, and even Protopopov's appointment as acting minister of internal affairs – each of these measures was taken at a time when the liberals were stepping up the tone of criticism. And each time these measures succeeded in keeping the Progressive Bloc clinging to the illusion that more concessions would follow. But Nicholas never intended to grant what the liberals wanted. As soon as he weathered a storm, he would return to reaction. Instead of forming a ministry of confidence in the summer of 1915 (which he could have done easily by replacing Goremykin with Krivoshein or Polivanov), he fired the 'rebellious' ministers one by one. By assuming supreme command-ership, he let the Aleksandra-Rasputin clique influence the appointments and dismissals of ministers. He never agreed to drop Protopopov, and never listened to the advice from various quarters to get rid of the unsavoury influence of his wife and Rasputin.

But these small victories ultimately led to Nicholas's downfall. The *krizis verkhov* (the crisis of power) was further deepened by them. It would be a mistake to characterise the entire tsarist cabinet as inept and corrupt. But there was no question that following the crisis in the summer of 1915 the overall quality of the government declined sharply. 'Ministerial leapfrogging' was but one manifestation of the erosion of the government's competency. Such scandals as Khvostov's plot to assassinate Rasputin and the arrest of Manasevich-Manuilov lowered the prestige of the government. Rasputin's frolicking and the

un-founded, sensational rumours about Rasputin, the empress and the 'dark forces' fed the basest popular imagination and invited the indignation of the decent public. It is true that the liberals were incapacitated by Nicholas's manoeuvres. But psychologically they deserted the government, and were prepared to accept revolution. Nicholas and his government thus irretrievably alienated an ally with whom they could have combatted the approaching storm from below.

The Liberals Form the Duma Committee and Assume Revolutionary Power

The liberals played a crucial role in the February Revolution. During the war, pushed by two conflicting forces – the government's intransigence and the approaching storm from below – the liberal opposition was rendered powerless. But when the revolution did come, it was the liberals who tipped the balance between the two forces and who had the most telling effect on the specific course of events during the revolution.

As the insurrection threw the capital into chaos, and eliminated all sources of authority, the liberals formed the Duma Committee. From its inception, the Duma Committee's stance was clear: it was intent to take power to overthrow the old regime. First, the Duma deputies defied the imperial decree of prorogation, and decided not to disperse. And then their 'private' meeting created the Provisional Committee of the State Duma – the Duma Committee – before finally, late at night on 27 February, the Duma Committee decided to assume power. But before that decision, the Duma Committee was coming quickly and surely to act as a revolutionary power. Kerenskii formed his own staff to take measures to organise insurgents into semi-disciplined military units to post guards in and out of the Tauride Palace, persuade other military units to join the insurrection, and arrest former tsarist ministers. Kerenskii's staff was transformed into the Duma Committee's Military Commission, headed by Colonel Engel'gardt. The actions of the Military Commission were not only aimed at the restoration of order and protection of governmental and other important institutions, but also at the destruction of the old regime. The Duma Committee sent its commissars to all the government ministries to take over government functions. Especially important was the takeover of the ministry of transport by Bublikov, who controlled all the railway movement and communications in his hand. Bublikov's telegram, which was sent all over Russia in Rodzianko's name, had tremendously important influence in inducing the nation to accept the authority of the Duma Committee as a revolutionary government.

But here we face the first contingent situation – a fork in the road. When the Duma deputies met in the Council of Elders and then at the private meet-

ing, Kerenskii and Rzhevskii proposed to defy the imperial order of prorogation, hold the regular session, and declare itself as a constituent assembly. Had the Duma taken such action, it would have elevated its authority tremendously. Both Rodzianko and Miliukov were adamantly opposed to this proposal at this time. As Kerenskii later recalled, that was the cardinal mistake. The Duma missed the first opportunity to establish an unquestionable revolutionary power.

Rodzianko Seeks to Wring Concessions from Nicholas II

Initially, Rodzianko, as the Chairman of the Duma and the Chairman of the Duma Committee, established himself as the unquestionable leader of the liberals. But he was constantly a few steps behind the fast-developing events. Having missed the chance to declare the Duma as a constituent assembly, his policy was to wring concessions from Nicholas II to establish a ministry of confidence. The Duma, not the emperor, was to play the role of the king-maker, and possibly he himself would head the ministry of confidence. But this mild policy was not sufficient not only to quell the radical demands of the insurgents but even to satisfy his colleagues, who considered the situation a golden opportunity to achieve the cherished dream of the liberals: the establishment of a responsible ministry – responsible to the legislative chamber. This would be a bona fide constitutional monarchy, similar to the British system.

Only then, 28 February, did Rodzianko escalate the demand. A ministry of confidence would not be sufficient; now the establishment of a responsible ministry would be required. He mobilised three senior grand dukes, composed a draft manifesto to establish a responsible ministry, headed by himself. But Nicholas and Alexandra flatly rejected this concession. By the time lawyer N.N. Ivanov, the intermediary between Rodzianko and the grand dukes, brought this abortive manifesto to the Tauride Palace, Miliukov took possession of and virtually confiscated it.

By this time Rodzianko's reputation suffered a severe blow. Engel'gardt and Bublikov issued an order in Rodzianko's name directed to the insurgent soldiers to return to the barracks and submit themselves to the control of the officers. Rodzianko's order provoked a violent reaction among the insurgent soldiers, who interpreted it as an attempt to restore the old military order and confiscate their weapons. Rodzianko's attempt to have direct negotiations with the tsar at Bologoe, then at Dno, and finally at Pskov, was treated by his colleagues with suspicion. They suspected that Rodzianko was interested in personal negotiations with Nicholas to effect a responsible ministry headed by himself, with the backing of the military leaders.

As Rodzianko's popularity waned, Miliukov emerged as the leader of the Duma Committee and the future provisional government. Even during the war, Miliukov was interested in challenging Rodzianko as the leader of the liberal opposition, and proposed Prince G.E. L'vov as the alternative candidate to head the liberal government. It was L'vov, not Rodzianko, whom Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich recommended to the tsar to head a ministry of confidence on the night of 27 February. And when the Soviet Executive Committee had crucial negotiations with the members of the Duma Committee for the transfer of power on 1 March, it was no longer Rodzianko who represented the Duma Committee, but Miliukov.

The Duma Committee Seeks the Abdication of Nicholas II and the Formation of the Provisional Government

The central question that confronted the emerging provisional government was the issue of its legitimacy. Three questions were involved in this issue: what to do with the monarchy, what relations should it have with the Petrograd Soviet, and what should be the relationship between the provisional government, on the one hand, and the State Duma and the Duma Committee on the other?

The idea of forcing Nicholas II to abdicate in favour of his son, Aleksei, under the regency of Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich, was already floated among the members of the Duma Committee on 28 February, but the Duma Committee adopted this option as its official policy on 1 March at the same meeting when it decided to form the provisional government.

Bublikov's takeover of the ministry of transport gave the Duma Committee a great advantage over the travelling emperor. Bublikov and his assistant Lomonsov, in constant consultation with Nekrasov and Rodzianko, monitored the movement of the imperial trains, and manipulated their movements and fed false information to block the trains from coming either to Petrograd or to Tsarskoe Selo. It was a fatal mistake that Nicholas II made by being AWOL for two crucial days wandering back and forth in the snow-covered railway lines from Mogilev, Blogoe, Dno and Pskov. But this cardinal mistake was in a way a measure of his political imbecility, as the autocrat in whose hands the entire weight of the empire and the dynasty was entrusted.

The Military Leaders and the Revolution

If Rodzianko was always one step behind the fast evolving events, the military leaders in the front were two steps behind. If obtaining accurate information

was a prerequisite for sound decisions, the Stavka and the military leaders in the front lacked the means to verify information coming from Petrograd, most of all the information filtered through Rodzianko.

Believing that Petrograd had fallen into the hands of the extreme socialists, the Stavka and the military leaders were determined to crush the revolution by sending the expeditionary forces led by General N.I. Ivanov. But they were from the beginning sympathetic to Rodzianko's idea of establishing a ministry of confidence, and as soon as they learned that the Duma Committee had assumed power, they urged the tsar to comply with Rodzianko's recommendation. When Rodzianko stepped up the demand to establish a responsible ministry, the Stavka swallowed this demand as well, and asked General Ruzskii of the northern front to convince Nicholas II to accept the new demand. It fell on Ruzskii to persuade the emperor to accept the concession of a responsible ministry against Nicholas's deep conviction that this would violate the sacred oath to uphold the principles of autocracy. It was with difficulty that finally he managed to have the emperor accept this concession under the collective pressure of all the commanders in the front. At the same time, the emperor sent his telegram to General Ivanov not to implement his counterrevolutionary expedition until Nicholas's arrival at Tsarskoe Selo.

Nicholas II Accepts His Abdication

No sooner had Ruzskii scored a victory in his hard-fought duel with the tsar on the concession to grant a responsible ministry, than Rodzianko contacted Ruzskii at 3:30 a.m. on 2 March and conveyed to the commander of the northern front the alarming news that the situation in Petrograd had reached such a point that the concession of a responsible ministry was no longer sufficient, and that the only way to prevent a wholesale massacre of officers by angry insurgents was to compel Nicholas II to accept his abdication in favour of his son under the regency of Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich. Although Rodzianko's information was full of inconsistencies that the Stavka and the military commanders were aware of, they nonetheless accepted Rodzianko's recommendation again. Alekseev circulated a telegram to all the commanders and requested their response to Nicholas's abdication. All the commanders were unanimous in recommending the abdication as the only way to save the army, the nation and the dynasty. Nicholas bowed to this collective pressure and decided to abdicate.

Here is another counterfactual supposition. What if the Stavka and the military leaders did not accept Rodzianko's recommendation for Nicholas's abdication? Drawing a line between a responsible ministry and Nicholas's abdication, the military could have told Rodzianko and the Duma Committee:

'Enough concessions. You got what you wanted: a constitutional monarchy. Take it or leave it'. The Stavka could have reactivated Ivanov's expedition with additional reinforcements, if it met Rodzianko's rejection. The outcome of this scenario would not have been promising, however. The counterrevolution would most likely have split the Duma liberals into two camps, but having already moved a long distance along the revolutionary path, most of them would have opposed the counterrevolution. Moreover, this action would have split the military leaders as well, since Ruzskii and Brusilov were adamantly opposed to this course. The spread of the revolution to Moscow and the Baltic Fleet posed a great concern to the military leaders, casting grave doubts about the reliability of loyal troops to put down the revolution in Petrograd. It is likely that all these factors were taken into considerations by Alekseev and the other military commanders. Despite the solemn oath they pledged to the tsar, loyalty to the tsar or the dynasty was the principle they were willing to sacrifice before the principle of preserving the army and the nation.

The Duma Delegates and Nicholas's Change of Mind

Ruzskii learned that the Duma Committee's delegates, Guchkov and Shulgin, would arrive at Pskov to negotiate with the emperor for his abdication. The commander of the northern front decided to wait until their arrival before he made the manifesto of Nicholas's abdication public.

When Guchkov and Shul'gin left Petrograd for Pskov, ending the monarchical system was the furthest thing from their mind. But these two monarchists did not know that Nicholas had already made up his mind. Expecting a hard fight to convince the tsar to accept his abdication, they were surprised to hear that Nicholas had already accepted his abdication. What surprised them more was Nicholas's amendment to abdicate not only for himself but also for his son in favour of Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich. They were not prepared for this, and they did not even know whether this succession was legal. Nonetheless, Guchkov and Shul'gin, without much serious consideration, accepted Nicholas's amendment. This decision, made on the spur of the moment, had dire consequences. It exceeded the charge of the Duma Committee entrusted to the Duma delegates, but more importantly, it was illegal, violating the succession law.

It was Nicholas's parting shot, equivalent to spitting on the history of the empire, the nation at war and his ancestors and relatives. And he did it without any pang of conscience. And despite the reputation of being a bold fighter, Guchkov accepted this amendment without fight.

It is interesting to look at two counterfactual suppositions. What if Ruzskii had made Nicholas's abdication manifesto public before the arrival of

the Duma delegates? If the whole world had known that he had abdicated and signed the manifesto, this would have made it difficult for Nicholas to advance his amendment. More importantly, what if Guchkov and Shul'gin refused to accept Nicholas's amendment? Would Nicholas then have withdrawn his decision to abdicate for himself? How would the military commanders have reacted to this refusal, after they had already put their collective pressure on the tsar to accept abdication?

There were good legal and political justifications for Guchkov and Shul'gin to refuse Nicholas's amendment, and since this unusual arrangement was illegal, there was the danger of the survival of the monarchical system, regardless of Grand Duke Mikhail's decision. The original formula would have initiated the constitutional monarchy with a clear division of power: the Council of Ministers as the executive power, elected from the Duma and appointed by the tsar, and the Duma serving as the legislative power. This was the system that the Kadets and other liberal parties as well as the Progressive Bloc had insisted on. This would undoubtedly have encountered opposition from the Petrograd Soviet and radical elements of the insurgents. But this system was considered as acceptable by the majority of the members of the Duma Committee and the Provisional Government, including Kerenskii, and the members of the Soviet Executive Committee would have accepted it, as Sukhanov indicated that they could live with it. Instead of abolishing the monarchical system until the Constituent Assembly, this would have assured the preservation of the constitutional monarchy until the Constituent Assembly decided to get rid of it. And the Duma, as the only elective representative body, though on the basis of unfair electoral law that disproportionately disfranchised the lower strata of society, would still have enjoyed enormous prestige and authority. This was where the line could have been drawn in the sand, with the potential of those who stood for the constitutional monarchy to rally behind the Duma against 'revolutionary democracy'.

But this chance was forever lost, due to Nicholas II's flippant decision and Guchkov's and Shul'gin's kneejerk decision to accept it. In the end, however, the preservation of the monarchical system could not have been sustained. Although the liberals were in favour of a constitutional system, they felt no abiding commitment to the monarchical system itself. The Russian monarchical system was integrally connected with the personality and performance of the monarch himself. Nicholas and Alexandra were singularly unpopular among the populace. There was no strong monarchical force to rally around the emperor. It was the emperor and the empress that nailed the lid to the coffin of the monarchical system itself.

The Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet

The second issue of legitimacy that confronted the provisional government was its relations with the Petrograd Soviet. Its leaders were woefully aware that the provisional government, composed of the privileged society, would not enjoy the support of the insurgent masses. That was not the liberals' fault; in fact, the liberals, especially the Kadets and the leaders of the War Industries Committees, had all along advocated the integration of the working class into the established system, an effort that was consistently opposed and sabotaged by the government. But faced with alienation from the common folks, the provisional government approached the Soviet Executive Committee to come up with an agreement so that the Petrograd Soviet would render its support for the provisional government, thus avoiding 'dual power'. Herein lies the dilemma of the liberals. Arkhipov's book on the liberals is subtitled: 'Hope and Despair'. Their 'hope' to create their cherished dream of a truly representative system conflicted with their 'despair' that the dream would not be able to be achieved due to the unbridgeable chasm between the established society and the common people. To bridge this gap, they needed the help of 'revolutionary democracy'.

The negotiations that were carried out on the night of 1–2 March were successful. The Soviet Executive Committee leaders were anxious to see a bourgeois government formed, they did not insist on including such hot issues as the war and the land, and limited themselves to the minimal demands necessary for democratic reforms. Miliukov even had the Soviet negotiators agree to have the statement he wrote on behalf of the Soviet printed side by side in the Petrograd Soviet's organ, *Izvestiia*.

And yet, when the Petrograd Soviet held the general session on 2 March, the pressure from below was so strong and persistent that Steklov had to withdraw his full support of the provisional government, and he had to make this a 'conditional support' [*postol'ku-poskol'ku*], as long as the provisional government carried out the promised reforms. The provisional government was left dangling in the air without obtaining the full-fledged support of the insurgent masses.

But what if the Executive Committee had accepted the right wing's insistence on joining the provisional government and forming a coalition government? After all, this was the policy pursued by Tseretelli (Menshevik), Chernov (SR), and Skobelev after the April crisis. This would not have eliminated the fundamental conflict between revolutionary democracy and the liberals, especially on the issue of war and land. Nonetheless, had a coalition government been created in March, the dynamics of the revolutionary process would have

developed in a different way. Here Chkheidze had to bear the major responsibility in opposition to such a coalition.

Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich Renounces the Crown

The final act of the end of the monarchical system occurred at Princess Putiatina's apartment at Millionnaia Street. Miliukov, persistently, and Guchkov, lamely, insisted on the need to preserve the monarchical system. To Miliukov, the grand duke's anointment of the provisional government was crucial for the provisional government to acquire legitimacy. But the rest of the Duma Committee and the provisional government members, including the supposedly staunch monarchists Rodzianko and Shul'gon, argued against Mikhail assuming the throne. His assumption of power would provoke a civil war, and none of them could guarantee his safety. The three-hundred year old Romanov dynasty came crumbling down, and together with it, the liberals' cherished dream of the constitutional monarchy disappeared.

But what if Mikhail had accepted the throne? Everyone knew that this succession was illegal and Mikhail had no legitimate claim to the throne. Emperor Mikhail II, even if he assumed the throne and even if he served merely as a figurehead, would have had little consequence. If the provisional government were to have sought legitimacy from the old regime, then it should have been from the tsar, when he abdicated, not from Mikhail, an imposter.

The Provisional Government and the Duma Committee

The final source of legitimacy that the provisional government could have sought was the continuation from the State Duma, and its executive organ, the Duma Committee. In fact, from its inception the Duma Committee functioned as a quasi-revolutionary power, especially centring around the activities of the Military Commission. Why didn't the Duma Committee declare itself a provisional government?

The reasons for this were partly due to the rivalry between Rodzianko and Miliukov for the leadership of the provisional government, their disagreement over the role of the provisional government in the post-revolutionary period, and the correlations of forces that developed from 1 March to 3 March.

Even if Rodzianko was defeated in the Duma Committee and excluded from the provisional government, the wounded bear pushed hard to elevate the Duma as a parent body of the provisional government and attempted to limit the provisional government to executive power responsible to the Duma. Miliukov and the Kadet Party strenuously opposed this position. At the very

first provisional government meeting, to which Rodzianko and other members of the Duma Committee without portfolio of the provisional government were pointedly not invited, the provisional government declared that it should inherit the 'plenitude' of power enjoyed by the tsar, that the Duma represented merely the relic of the old regime, and that it considered the Fundamental Laws to be abolished. This is a stunning document that defined the provisional government as a dictatorial power, enjoying the executive, legislative and possibly judicial power unencumbered by any institutions; a position that was diametrically contradictory with the liberal position that opposed autocratic arbitrariness [*proizvol*]. By throwing the Duma under the bus, Miliukov managed to kill two birds with one stone: Rodzianko and the Duma.

The correlation of forces was also moving in a left direction in the period from 28 February to 2 March. Rodzianko's order touched off a storm of protest, which culminated in the issuance of Order No. 1. The Petrograd Soviet intervened to stop Rodzianko's train from leaving Warsaw Station for a rendezvous with the tsar, and finally, the Soviet plenary session on 2 March derailed the hard-won results of the negotiations that Miliukov had wrung from the Soviet Executive Committee.

So Miliukov won. But at what cost? He was denying the very foundation on which the provisional government could claim its legitimacy. The Duma was the only elected representative body that could counterpose itself to the Petrograd Soviet, and the prestige and the authority of the Duma were incomparably greater than that of the Petrograd Soviet. Despite its claim to autocratic power, the provisional government was left with only one source of legitimacy: the sanction of the Petrograd Soviet.

Herein lies the real paradox of the February Revolution. Despite its enormous prestige, power and authority, the provisional government came to rely on the Petrograd Soviet for its existence – an institution that was incomparably weaker and more divided.

The February Revolution as the Prelude to a Cataclysmic Revolution Ahead

On 3 March thousands of people again appeared in the streets, but their mood was festive. They greeted the news of the end of the monarchy with enthusiasm. The provisional government issued an order to shop owners and banks to reopen, and some actually began operation on this day. The general situation in the city was quickly returning to normal. Then, during the night of 3 March, the temperature dropped sharply. And Saturday morning dawned with a fierce

Russian blizzard raging. It was the first bad weather since the beginning of the revolution. According to an English eyewitness, the blizzard did more than the militia to restore order. On 4 March, thanks to an act of God, the streets were deserted for the first time since 23 February. The bad weather that Empress Alexandra had wished would drive workers from the streets came too late. In the afternoon the snow stopped and beautiful, sunlit snow covered streets and buildings. People reappeared in the streets, not to demonstrate, but to resume their normal life. They greeted each other like on Easter. Many stores were open, cabs were in sight, and newspapers reappeared. Red banners hung from buildings and windows. Crowds climbed up on the buildings and tore down the tsarist emblems of the double eagles. The first day of New Russia had begun.³

According to Leiberov's study, the February Revolution claimed the lives of 433 persons in Petrograd, 313 of whom were insurgents and 120 of whom were police, gendarmes, officers and loyal soldiers. An additional 1,214 were wounded, of whom 1,136 were insurgents, and 300 were crippled, of whom 291 were insurgents. Of the total of 1,740 killed, wounded and crippled insurgents, 535 or 30 percent were workers and 832 or 48 percent were soldiers.⁴ These figures show that, contrary to popular belief, the February Revolution in Petrograd was by no means bloodless.

On 4 March Ruzskii became for the first time acquainted with Order No. 1. Admiral Nepenin in the Baltic Fleet was shot to death. The disintegration of the imperial army spread to the front. The February Revolution in Petrograd was completed, but it was only the beginning of a larger social and political upheaval to come.

People celebrated the end of monarchical rule by hoisting flags in buildings. Amid the euphoria of the revolution that was just completed, poet Anna Akhmatova predicted, with her uncanny premonition, that this would be only the beginning of an even larger upheaval and bloodshed, even worse than what happened in the French Revolution.⁵

3 Jones 1917, pp. 218–19.

4 Leiberov 1970, vol. 2, pp. 503, 507.

5 Anrep 1991, p. 86.

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